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The Witness of the Passion

OF OUR

MOST HOLY REDEEMER

The Witness of the Passion

OF OUR

MOST HOLY REDEEMER

BY THE REV.

W. J. KNOX LITTLE, M.A.

CANON RESIDENTIARY OF WORCESTER, AND RECTOR OF ST. ALBAN'S, MANCHESTER

"Gratia et Pax a Jesu Christo qui est testis fidelis"

New York

E. & J. B. YOUNG & COMPANY

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I dedicate this Volume

TO

RICHARD WILLIAM CHURCH, D.D.

Dean of St. Paul's

IN LOVING ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF ABUNDANT KINDNESS

AND

AS A SLIGHT EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE AND RESPECT TOWARDS

ONE WHOSE LIFE IS A CONSTANT WITNESS

OF THE POWER OF

HUMBLE AND UNSWERVING LOYALTY

TO

TRUTH AND DUTY

THE COLLEGE, WORCESTER,
All Saints' Day, 1883.

PREFACE.

THE Sermons in this volume were preached *extempore*, and most of them on more than one occasion. The first three were preached in substance in St. Paul's Cathedral in the Lent of 1882, and the following four and the last in the same place in the Lent of 1883; but their earlier form has been altered and corrected in accordance with later treatment of the same subjects.

These Sermons attempt to suggest thoughts and teachings arising out of only *one* aspect of the Passion. Many of the deeper truths of that adorable mystery have been in this little volume scarcely touched; but to think reverently though slightly of *any* department of that mysterious and touching story may be helpful, and cannot be wrong. The volume has been long delayed owing to the constant pressure of necessary work. It is published in accordance with the wish of friends, and in the hope that it may comfort some

penitent, or arouse some careless soul, or help some labouring lives in the toils of their pilgrimage, to be conformed at a less disheartening distance to the standard bequeathed to us in the greatness and sorrow of the Man of men.

THE COLLEGE, WORCESTER,
All Saints' Day, 1883.

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SERMON I.

THE WITNESS TO THE MAJESTY OF THE TRUTH

The Witness to the Majesty of the Truth.

"*To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth.*"—ST. JOHN xviii. 37.

ONCE more, dear friends, once more by the goodness of God, once more, with the wealth and with the limitation of a most awful opportunity, once more also with the seriousness of the sense of a great responsibility, once more by the kindness of those who minister in this Cathedral, I am permitted to speak to you for Christ.

Now I feel that the subject of our meditation is clearly defined. To speak under the dome of this vast Cathedral, which itself is crowned by the Cross, to speak here in the palpitating heart of London, the greatest city of the modern world, surfeited with luxury, crippled with pain, saturated with sorrow; to speak to you, my brothers, undying souls, who have (if I may be permitted a paradox) the opportunities, the preparations of life in order that you may die; and to speak when the cycle of the Church's Calendar brings to us the great thought of the Passion, is, I submit, to be left with no choice, to be forced to con-

front one overwhelming subject, and you would not bear with me if I made any other determination. But none other do I desire to make; I *must* speak to you of the Cross. Christ Crucified must be the theme for Passiontide; the preacher's duty is plain. And so, my brothers, if that be the case, there is at least the satisfaction of knowing what we are about. I must treat in some sense of the Mystery of the Passion.

Well, first it is well to remember that we are turning to a theme which is boundless, which is changeful. It has many aspects. Gazing on it, you gaze on a tract which knows no frontier. It is dark, it is solemn, like an impenetrable forest; it is bright, it is attractive, as an azure sky; it is like the wide and solemn reaches of the Roman Campagna, which take sometimes the sun, sometimes the shadow, but always remain fascinating and strange. At one time it was permitted me to speak in this place of the general character of the Mystery of the Passion; now, God helping me, I desire to speak of one department of its power. Our subject is the Passion of Jesus as a testimony, as a WITNESS, as a revelation.

Thinking of it thus, let us remember for a moment the value and the splendour of the text. The text, so it seems to me, places us "in position:" it supplies a need; it is a touch of an artist's hand; it is practical; it is direct; it furnishes the *mise en scène.* And further (there is no doubt about it) the text is one of the

great words of history; it is one of those possessions that we cannot part with; it is at once a lofty saying and a divine revelation. It is the avowal of a mission by One Who felt that that mission—to be carried on, to be perfected—required, amid whatever danger, a purpose that knew no bending; of a mission crowned at last with that success which is the rightful homage to a moral conqueror; and of a mission the effect of which has told upon the world for centuries, and is destined to affect the human race for ever.

If, then, it be true that that which arrests the attention and elevates the mind of man is sublime, these words of Jesus have all the elements of the sublime: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth."

Now, my brothers, I put it to you, if I am to speak in such a place, at such a time, must I not speak practical thoughts; for you and I are in this world to live, probably to suffer, and certainly to die? Must I not speak concentrated thoughts, for the time allotted to us is measured out by a handful of moments? Must I not speak serious thoughts, for life is a serious matter? And can I choose better, in answering these questions —can I choose better than speak of that mission which Christ Himself asserted to belong to His Passion, the mission of a witness to the Truth? remember, to *the Truth!* With this before us, three thoughts deserve our attention here and now.

I.

This claim made by the death-stricken Christ is at any rate startling; it ought at least to arrest attention. It is no light matter to remember that when we are confronted with the Crucified, we are face to face with One Who claims to invest us with the power of entering into, of understanding, that which is of worth and permanence in a world of shifting scenes and unreal appearances. Man desires the Truth. If the tragedy of the Passion is supremely a witness to the Truth, man should study, and with diligence, the Passion. Philosophers have in all time struggled to fulfil the office of the Crucified, only, be it remembered, in a different fashion. They speculated once as they speculate now. With what result? Doubt, uncertainty, at last despair. The teachers of Athens, the lecturers of Alexandria, led men to this, to feel that a search after, even a wish for, *the Truth* was an expenditure, an unworthy expenditure, of moral energy upon a miserable fancy and a baseless enthusiasm. "Man cannot ascend to the gods," said Plotinus, "let the gods come down to man." Well, my brothers, it is our prerogative to say, not "the gods," but "GOD" *has* come. For better, for worse, it is the claim of Christianity to proclaim no speculative philosophy, but unchanging fact; and we Christians assert that in the life, and above all in the Passion of our

Divine Redeemer, whatever else there is, there is this —a Witness to the Truth.

II.

Again, if our first thought is of the greatness of the claim, our next must be of the value and extent of this stupendous testimony. Stupendous certainly, and very awful, for it was born, O my Jesus, in thy Death!

The value of any testimony will depend upon three things: 1. The position of him who testifies, as affording him an opportunity to know. 2. The translation of his testimony into the language of intelligible fact. 3. The wealth of expenditure, moral, spiritual, human, to which he thinks it worth his while to rise for sake of that which he teaches, as the guarantee of its certainty, and the expression of his sense of its value.

Now, as to the first test, that is settled (is it not?) for you and me: Christ is God. He *knows*. As to the second, there is no room for mistake, the solemnity of the Incarnation gives the answer: Christ is man. And as to the third, *that* I desire that you should contemplate: Oh, as to the third, you can never find wealth of expenditure that shall compare for a moment to the dignity and the anguish of the Passion. Christ then, at least, has guaranteed His right to the assertion that He is a Witness to the Truth. If the subject-matter—

the Truth—is of unparalleled importance, the testimony offered is of the highest value.

III.

And keep always before you the extent, the intensity of that testimony. My brothers, there are certain prominent facts, certain simple but terrible ideas which cannot fail to be in the highest degree interesting to all. To speak in the language of these is to speak in "a tongue understanded of the people." Like the passions, like the forces of sensation, they belong to humanity. Like the breezes or the sunshine, they know no national frontier, they are not hindered by the barriers of hills, they belong to man as man. If you speak in the language of these ideas, you *must* be attended to. Sometimes they are beautiful, sometimes they are awful, always they are sublime. They *possess* the human spirit; drawn out into action, therefore, they interpret the human soul; they penetrate into the depths of the palaces of princes; they belong, O my brothers, to each one of you, and touch you in your physical as well as your spiritual condition; they are like the great crags of the Wetterhorn, sometimes they smile as they take the sunshine, sometimes they frown when they gather the shadow; they are coloured, yes, they are coloured by the circumstances of our condition; their aspect varies, but *they* never change.

Now, of such ideas one is Life; life known to us all in its individual mystery of trial, known to some of us in its ecstasy of passion, of ambition, of success. Another is Pain, with its impenetrable, its inexplicable sorrow. And a third—the greatest in dreadfulness, in dignity,—is the mystery of Death. To speak to man in the language of Life, to speak to man in the language of Pain, to speak to man in the language of Death,—to speak in any of these is to be attended to. O my friends, what is it then,—and in a great subject-matter,—to speak in the language of them all! There are few teachers who have dared to do it. I believe there is but One Who has done it wholly, and thereby has achieved a success; but there was One, O my Redeemer, there *was* One! Life! He had essential life, life fully possessed, life in its intrinsic splendour, life in its unbeginning beauty. He placed it under the command of exquisite suffering, and through Pain conducted it to the darkness of the Grave.

Since the tragedy of Calvary, Pain touches Life and transforms it, for the grave has become a Divine power transfigured and glorified by the Cross.

It is the union of these three very awful facts—each touched with a special solemnity—which enhances the witness of the Passion.

There are groups of pines on the crag-ledges of Umbria which strike the eye against the clear still sky when the autumn night is coming. Each tree alone is

weird, it is gnarled and twisted, bared by the tempest, or distorted and tortured by the pitiless wind; but the group they form together has nothing but dignity, the dignity of support and endurance in a lonely world.

In the picture of the Divino Amore in the Borghese Gallery certainly the eyes of the Madonna are as beautiful, certainly her tender attitude is as worthy of the Mother as any from Raphael's brush, certainly the Child is as Divine and the attendants as warding and full of worship as in the San Sisto itself; but it is the group—the human in its many modulations of feeling, the Divine in its calmness of repose—it is *the group* that gives the life, serene and heavenly, and all its own.

Now it is essential Life, together with unparalleled Pain leading up to a voluntary and a dreadful Death, which gives to the witness of the Passion the emphasis of extent and intensity. In very deed, and at the highest figure, He witnessed to the Truth.

IV.

Lastly, Have you done, or are each of you, my brothers, doing your part? Consider—

1. Truth so witnessed to *must* be valuable. Nay, the Truth is the one valuable thing to live for. It belongs not merely to Time, it is at home in Eternity. It is,

therefore, the great object of desire to an eternal creature.

2. More. We have to remember, in face of the Crucifix, Truth demands and requires the heavy tax of sacrifice. You cannot, O Christian, contentedly fall into line with public prejudice, you cannot always bow submissive to popular opinion, you cannot be *laissez faire* in matters of Eternity. Follower of the Crucified, sooner or later you must make sacrifices for the Truth.

3. And finally, if the Truth is so awful and makes such severe demands, at least it has gifts in compensation. "The Truth," said our Master, "shall make you free;" and He Himself—my brothers, remember it, for we, the members of His Body, share His dignity—He Himself asserted His Kingship as evident by His office in relation to the Truth: "Art Thou a King then?" The answer was the Sorrows of the Passion: "Thou sayest it: I am a King; for this end was I born, for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the Truth." Certainly He is crowned by the kingly Truth, but He is crowned with thorns. He who is loyal to the Truth is free, he is a king; yes, but he who values the Truth submits assuredly to the Passion. Certainly he must suffer.

My friends, we are born for Eternity. We will then, surely we will fix our eyes upon the Crucifix; so gazing, we will ask, "What is 'the testimony of Jesus'?" We

will pray for the Grace from the Five Wounds of His Sorrow, that knowing that testimony, we may sustain its heritage of suffering, yet not without its inheritance in the land of the free. Yes, in the land of the free! O dear friends, "the Truth as it is in Jesus" is sure to bring you pain, certain to cause you sacrifice, but—in whatever chains of trouble, or ignorance, or sin ye are imprisoned—it is able, believe me, it is able through His might, through His Mercy—able to make you free.

SERMON II.

THE WITNESS TO THE MYSTERY OF SIN

The Witness to the Mystery of Sin.

"The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."
1 St. John i. 7.

WE saw, dear friends, that our Blessed Master came, both in the earlier part of His life and also in the tragedy of His death, to be a "Witness to the Truth," and certainly we are bound never to blink the fact that Christ (as of course the Christian Church also, following in the track of her Master)—that Christ claims to proclaim the absolute and unchanging Truth; and further, we are bound to remember (are we not?) that that truth is needed, is supremely needed, to solve the problems of life.

My brothers, there can be no question about it to any serious person, that man is placed in the midst of many and perplexing problems; problems of which the solution, however difficult that solution may be, cannot long, cannot safely be ignored. Beneath us and above us there are shrouds of darkness; before our eyes is the solemnity of the tempest, and in our ears the singing of the storm, and if for a moment there be a rift in the clouds, and we see, as in a northern sunset, something of

the fair clear crimson of the distant heavens, it is for a moment and no more; and again we turn in the midst of the enshrouding darkness and ask in bewilderment, What does it mean?

I.

Now, my brothers, amongst these problems (we must clear the path by recalling it)—amongst these problems none so striking, none so serious, as the problem of the Fall. It is quite impossible that the *fact* of Evil should be denied. Those who are glad enough to *forget*, with the world before them cannot *deny* it. Life may have its sweet refreshment, but there is a side of sorrow. It is all very well to look at the plains of Lombardy in the haze of their afternoon siesta, and under the languid splendour of an Italian sky; but the night comes, and we are climbing the ledges of the mountains, and the rocks of the St. Gothard are reft with the storm. Alas! we plunge so deep into the gloom of tempest, we can scarce remember that once it was day. The life of the creature is traversed by a strange tract of shadow. It is all very well for the German poet or the German philosopher to speak of the indestructibly healthy tone of the ancient world, or of the "healthy sensuousness" of the Greeks; but look more closely on that world, and there is plenty of sunshine indeed, like the fair sweet

light of the skies of Attica, but, like the fierce storms of the wintry Ægean, also plenty of shadow.

I am reiterating a truth incontestably accepted, that in the sweetest tones of Grecian poetry, in the finest examples of Grecian art, in the more mysterious literature of India,—in all the life and teachings of the ancient world there is a strain of melancholy, a half-articulated, a dark, a sorrowful certainty of something wrong. Ah! it is the problem before us, the remembrance of ruin and the sense of sin.

Well now, the question, How is it to be dealt with? The answers are many, and I doubt not that each one of you practically has been giving his own. "Ignore it," says the cynic, and he shrugs his shoulders; "ignore the fact of sin." That is, in truth, with a stately gait and lofty air to play at the trick of the bird of the desert, and in view of danger to hide your head. Is that the part of a man? "Make light of it," says the man of business; "life is needed for serious occupation; there is scarcely time for the work to be done. Remember, to treat *sin* as a serious question is the necessary method for the rhapsody of the preacher, but *we* have to do with practical life." O my brothers, I desire in all things to be practical. To be practical means to take into account the facts of the moment, and treat them with the respectful attention due to facts. Now among these (let us not forget it) life is short; it is a time of probation; it is *the* opportunity

for conquering Evil; it is true we live, but certainly also we must die.

Next comes the sentimentalist, "How treat Evil? Make it pretty; treat it as a subject for the display of taste; trick it out in soft and cunning colours; robe it with dainty fingers in a glorious dress; make it—for it affords a good material—make it the background of pictures; make it the foundation of the drama." My brothers, sin, and trial, and sorrow are too stern, too common also, to be dealt with like this. You yourselves are too serious. Your nature is of too great a dignity to be put off with such philosophy, to agree to treat a severe reality as if the shadow of a baseless dream. I take it, ye men of London, that ye are of other stuff. I take it that your life is too matter-of-fact a matter to be dealt with as if it were an improbable romance.

And then comes Christ; He too has His method of treatment. We proclaim it from the chairs of Truth, it may be said, as an old world-worn message; but old things are not always obsolete, and at least it is a method worthy of the scrutiny of *men*. Christ witnessed to two truths on the Mystery of Sin. To grasp these personally is to change the attitude of a life; to hold them practically is to reduce to due relation, and place in right proportion the efforts and energies of our daily toil. Men who do so keep the eye persistently fixed upon the essential and enduring; to them there is no failure in life's perspective, the transitory is not treated with the

love of the eternal, and trifles fall into their proper place. Yes, brothers, to start from this beginning is to govern our life and actions neither by haphazard guess, or personal proclivity, or vague speculation, but by the deep and strong philosophy of the Christian Church.

Christ witnessed to this mystery, and no truth of His Revelation so awfully needs His manner of message. It was, you remember, the manner of Death. There is not anything to my mind so perfectly terrific as the thought of Death. The Land of Death is like the strange opening gorge in the peaks of some mountain above the burning desert, where the traveller is uncheered by any breath of flowers, or any humming of the wandering bee; where there is no voice of bird, no trickling of the stream, nor any waving of the grass in spring; no sign, no sound of life amongst the arid rocks; in the noonday they are scorching, in the night they are severe. The Land of Death! It is a scene of a unique experience. A dreadful fact, a common fact, a fact so lofty it is worth remembering—certainly once, and as certainly once only, you and I must die. It is a great thing this Death! And to enter on it as a volunteer, when a man *selects* it as his means of testimony, this is sublime!

And this selection was made by Christ. He who did not merely live, but was Life itself, He chose to die. I repeat it as worthy of the remembrance of sober people, that, so choosing, the fact of which our Master spoke

with those lips of suffering, that fact must have been a serious fact. My brothers, that fact was Sin.

Therefore let cynics sneer or worldlings laugh, but we on our trial, we who are alive and who certainly must die, we cannot close our ears to the message of the Passion, we must remember the seriousness of Sin. It is in fact the assertion of the death-stricken Redeemer, that whilst there are calamities many in our path of sorrow, the one serious catastrophe is Sin.

II.

Why? Sin, in so far as it *prevails*, is a final rupture between the creature and the Creator; Sin is the dissolution of the bonds of life; it is the separation of man from the source of his being; Sin is the act by which man in his madness parts company with God. It has therefore—as Christianity feels and teaches—it must have, severe results; it creates a condition of soul. We, each of us, have fluctuating moods, and tempers subjected to the influence of change; the weather affects us; a passing word will turn astray the sweeping current of our hurrying thoughts; this afternoon we are cheered by the sunlight, to-morrow we may be saddened by the shadow; we are the victims of a frenzy of feeling; we have tingled to the ecstasy of pleasure; we have staggered in a delirium of joy; we have been cut to the quick by the anguish, the acute, the exquisite anguish

of sorrow. Man's feelings pass, his temper changes, but the deliberate act of his rebellious will is not a temper is not a feeling; no, there lies between them the untraversed chasm between the trifling accident and the solemn act. That act of a rebellious will is Sin, and it has this serious influence on the soul,—it creates a condition.

Sin! It leaves its mark behind; it lends a certain horror to person, or circumstance, or place, which does not of itself fade away, and which can only change its character by the power of the Precious Blood. There is a spot on the slope of the Schilthorn where, near a frowning rock and in the dip of the mountain gully, there stands, soft against the blue of summer, sharp against the winter clouds, a lonely cross. It does not mark a grave, but it marks the spot of Death's sudden summons. It reminds the traveller of a pathetic tragedy. Sometimes creeping over it comes the breeze of the valley laden with the freshness of sloping pastures and rich with the sweetness of innumerable flowers. Sometimes there pass across it, leaving messages of unuttered sorrow, the voices of commiserating winds. Sometimes it gathers brightness from the blaze of sunlight; sometimes it takes a sober tone from dim fantastic shadows sent travelling over it by the long processions of the stately clouds. Clouds, sunshine, light, and wind speed away on their journey, but *it* stands changeless and alone. Death has made that spot for ever memorable;

although the Cross robs Death of horror, for it speaks, though seriously, of Immortality.

Now thus with Sin. It also marks with horror, lonely, unalloyed. It leaves its mark, but the horror can be changed to sinners by the contact of the Cross.

Sin! It is a revolutionary power. It sweeps away and changes. "This"—we may say in words like the French statesman, gazing on the mob of Paris, demanding no longer redress and justice, but plunging into a carnival of crime—"this is not reform, this is revolution." Sin revolutionises. It darkens the understanding, it chills the affections, it corrupts the springs of motive, it deceives the most keen-eyed perceptions, it paralyses spiritual activity, it lays its icy arrest on interior goodness and interior joy. It is a concentrated force of petrifaction; it creates the hard heart—of which St. Bernard speaks with horror—which forgets the past, is indifferent to the present, and careless of the future, proof against the voice of pity and the cry of prayer. The noblest nature is revolutionised by Sin.

Every one of us, I suppose, rightly or wrongly, has and must have his philosophy of life. It must be so. But I submit that *that* philosophy ought to be based upon the recognition of fundamental fact. Now if we are to rear the fabric of a noble and a holy life, let us take as axiomatic this witness of the Passion—"the exceeding sinfulness of Sin."

III.

Well, further, granted that Sin is serious, the question is, "What then?" There are answers right and left, before, behind us, in the thoughts and philosophy of an exceedingly energetic age. Summarise them shortly, they amount to this: "Wrong may be wrong, so the Church is telling us, but there is the method of education, of civilisation, of progress, by which it may gradually be undone."

Now it is here, my brothers, that the Christian joins issue with the unbeliever, here that the merely philosophical is distinguished from the religious man. "Progress if you like," says the follower of the Crucified, "but you must start from a fresh beginning: you must undo evil before you advance in goodness; the effect of Sin must be reversed in the soul of the creature, progress is not pardon. Sin must be cancelled, must be forgiven."

And then appears the value of the work and witness of the Crucified. Christ assures us not only of the grievousness of sin, but further that the evil can be undone through the Mystery of the Passion, that sin can be forgiven.

It is a strange and awful, though a blessed message; but a message it is. It staggers the unbeliever. "What!" he cries, "if God be God, cannot he forgive without

Atonement?" I answer, with my eyes on Calvary, "No, being God, without Atonement He cannot." You ask further, "Why?" Conscious of the greatness of God and the infinity of our ignorance, I answer, "*Wholly* I cannot tell, but certainly the fact is certified, and with it the wherefore of a reason why, in the words of many witnesses. It is witnessed in Conscience, with its serious charges and awful forebodings; it is witnessed in the blood-stained path of the history of Expiation; it is witnessed in every line of the Bible; it is witnessed by the Christian Church, and above all, clearer, more terrible, is the stern and living witness of the Passion. There is such a thing as Righteousness, it is not a semblance, it is a reality; there is such a thing as Divine Mercy, but it is not a phase of kindly indifference. The solemn truth proclaimed by the Passion is the seriousness of Sin, the possibility of pardon, *yet* the unalterable holiness of God. "Mercy and Truth have met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other;" but that Divine embrace was in the agony of the Redeemer's Death.

IV.

One word more. Realise your ignorance. Remember in this awful universe you cannot know about these mysteries except what God may teach you; you *can* understand enough to act upon what God teaches. Re-

member that the hand which stretches for God's gift is the faith of a repenting soul; that true repentance is a stern, a heart-rending, a manly sorrow; that that hand grasps the merits of the Representative Man, the power of the Precious Blood. Oh, this is the power which can reverse the revolutionary results of Sin, this is the power of pardon.

Brothers, beneath all louder, clearer voices there is the deeper mystery of the undertone. It is heard in the summer night in the rising and sinking of the breeze, its whispers travel through the swaying grasses, and ripple through the sleeping leaves, its more serious cadence sounds in the sighs of the pine forests in the West, and its deeper basses are heard far down in the lone Atlantic, when the waves are heaving in thunderous music beneath the blows of the frantic storm. It keeps its solemn, measured music beneath each song of Life and Being,—the *forte* and *accelerando* of simpler, statelier sound,—Nature's buried undertone! It is heard in the poetry of Homer; it is not absent in Dante's,—above all in Dante's,—sense of sorrow, and severity on Sin; the reader of Shakespeare has been touched by it; and hearts have thrilled to it in the music of Spohr; it comes out in the murmur of the sleeper, in broken, in half-whispered words to those we love; in the moan of unarticulated sorrow which is heard by many a grave; it is a witness of the unexplained perplexity of human greatness and human

degradation,—the undertone of the life of man! It is the sigh of the suffering, of the troubled heart; it is the moaning of the imprisoned, the voice of a great longing for liberty; it is the witness of this wild, passionate, sorrow-laden, yet glorious nature, that Sin is all unworthy; that there is nothing so bad, nothing so base, nothing so full of ruin, as for any one of us to act unworthily of our better selves, unworthily of God; it is the guarantee that when we have risen to such nobler thoughts the result is penitence, that that revolution from what is evil may be possible, as—so we know at Calvary—possible it is.

"Men my brothers, men the workers," this London of yours, in all the grim insistence of its vast activity, what will it be but a dream of the distance when you come to die? The one thing that will brook no refusal to be recognised will be the experiences of the sin you have committed unless those experiences have been reversed or transfigured by the power, by the tenderness of Christ. Brave men, face life in its reality; get out of the merely dreaming crowd; face your sin in its true horror, see its unworthiness, see its degradation, see its revolutionary, its destructive force; face it, repent of it, strangle it, not by your own unaided efforts,—for before such an enemy we are weaklings,—but by the unfailing force of the Crowned and Crucified, of Him Who "liveth, and was dead."

SERMON III.

THE WITNESS TO THE POWER OF PRINCIPLE

The Witness to the Power of Principle.

"*When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him Who judgeth righteously.*"—1 ST. PETER ii. 23.

GRANTED, my brothers, the fact, granted the Mystery of the Passion; well, we believe, we have asserted—and we stand by the assertion, and we cling to the belief—that that mystery is to each one of us a revelation and a witness of the most serious truth; it is in fact a manifestation of the true philosophy of being. Like Abraham in converse with his unearthly visitors, we have taken upon us to speak unto the Lord; we have cross-questioned the Crucified; we have asked Him not only to tell us something of the deep, the imperial power involved in the mystery, but also to yield us a revelation useful for our practical action every day. We have inquired of our Blessed Master generally, what is the value of the Truth He brings, and the answer has been "of infinite importance," as evidenced by His method of revealing; we have desired to know what is *the* serious calamity of human life, and the answer has been, "Sin;" and we have asked what is the method of deliverance from this serious calamity,

and the answer again has come, "Repentance, and then Pardon through the Precious Blood." We turn yet once again—with the full sunshine upon it—to that agonised Face; yet once again we ask a question and demand an answer, and again that answer is to be found in the Passion. Thus it runs, "What is the secret, O Thou Crucified, what is the secret of a noble and happy life?"

I.

Well, first, this question is nowise the dream of an enthusiast, it is the question of the human race. As surely, quite as surely as the sweet music of the thrush in the spring-time dies down into silence in the leafy heats of the advancing summer, so, I remind you, the fond carelessness of childhood melts into the distance of receding years, and the soul wakens up in each of us and asks at some solemn moment, "Where is the secret of the happiness of life?" It is the longing for an answer to this question which lies at the root of many a difficult demand made upon a father's knowledge and wisdom by the curiosity of a child. And for those at least who are under the responsibility of fatherhood, I would submit that it is exceedingly important to have an answer that shall govern conduct well.

And then (let us dwell upon the thought for a moment) the question is also asked, unconsciously indeed by the uncultivated, but consciously by the

cultivated philosophers of the world, who have made the discovery of an answer the business of their lives. I do not think that the answers have been quite satisfactory. One of the greatest of these was given by the Stoics of Rome, and (for our time is short, and one cannot therefore afford to give illustrations) the result of that answer so given was simply this, that Cato, the greatest of them all, who might have died the death of a martyr, died, in fact, the death of a slave.

The question asked then is asked amongst us now: "What is the secret of a noble, of a happy life?" Now, we are bound to remember that there is practical need of an answer. There are men to be found everywhere who are slaves of pleasure; there are more still who are the victims of passion; there are more, perhaps, who are the thralls of toil. There are women who give themselves up to the flimsy flatteries of pretended admiration, or struggle for passing amusement, or whose life is one hopeless surrender to the increasing exactions of exhausting work. Each of them—practically each one of us, in our mortal pilgrimage—is trying some (inadequate, as I think, but some) imagined panacea to meet the difficulties of the question how to be happy, how to lead a noble life. And then, is it not true, that as the mists of autumn creep up gradually upon the dying woods, so there creeps over each soul which attempts to find its satisfaction in such solutions—there creeps unconsciously,

but yet at last entirely, the miserable sense of a pervading discontent? And so I take it, a practical answer is still needed by mankind.

O Thou Crucified, what is Thy answer to the question, "What is the secret of a noble, what of a happy life?" My brothers, there is an answer from Jesus our Redeemer, an answer, however, which does not meet the approbation of certain sections of thinkers. Mr. Greg writes, for instance, his clever and his serious essays, his "Rocks Ahead," his "Cassandra Warnings," his "Sighs *de Profundis*," but failing to see that in Christ is the only comfort in the sorrow, from first to last, as I think, he misses the point; Strauss has left us a most strange, hard, cruel "Life of Jesus," and you wonder when you have got to the end of it how serious German thinkers can have imagined that *that* is a representation of the stately figure of nineteen centuries ago; and as for M. Renan, his contribution to the solution of our difficulties is a romance, a pure romance, so strange, so sentimental, so picturesque, so touching, you and I could almost be interested in it if we were not insulted with the assumption that it is a "Life of *Jesus*." And then we turn to the good old story which we read when we were children, which I trust we read to-day, and we find that *there* there is an answer, practical, serious, plain, overwhelming, which comes from the *real* life and the Mystery of the Passion of the Lord.

What is that?

II.

Well, let us never forget the fact that Christ did not neglect the *happiness* of man; in His life, in His teaching, in the sorrows of His passion, He remembered the beauty, the greatness of *blessedness;* and for this reason the first eleven verses of the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel are worth the recurring meditation of every serious man amongst us who has realised that he has to live, and that one day he must die, to whom, therefore, it is all-important to remember that if he desires to know the secret of blessedness, in Christ that secret is to be found.

Now, pause for an instant. I grant you, men of London, I grant you entirely, distinctly, conspicuously, that the explanation of blessedness given by the Passion of Jesus Christ is altogether different from the explanation of the world; and further—for I have felt it—and, O my brothers, you have felt it too—that the theory of the world is not contemptible. There is, however, a difference, and this as distinct, as entire, as there is, for instance, between the pure unearthly landscape of Perugino and the strong coarse colour of Rubens. Contrast the autumn sunset as it tints, as I remember, the wild, weird hills of Arezzo, and the glare of a burning London noontide on a dusty August day, and you have an outward sign and symbol of the difference

in these opposing offers; still, for I would be true in this chair of Truth, it is not to be denied that you have great temptations, that the theory of happiness of the world is not contemptible, but it is not the theory of happiness put forward by the crucified Christ.

What is that? I limit myself to a suggestion; I ask you to think it out; Christ living, above all, Christ dying, *i.e.* Christ summing up His teaching at last in the concentrating manifestation of the Cross; *that* Christ so great, being, as He is, Humanity by representation—to say nothing for the moment about His Divine life—teaches us that the secret of a life which shall be noble and happy is simply that it be governed not by taste, nor by self-interest, nor by sentiment, but *by principle.*

Brethren, remember—and I say it with the feeling and the pain of a human heart—to the apostle of sentiment, to the apostle of taste, it is abundantly possible in the more solemn moments of our trial and probation to be even criminally guilty of the most entire, most exquisite selfishness. And so it is we Christians in this regard are forced to dismiss our taste, our self-interest, and our dreamy sentiment, and to substitute the teaching of the Passion, which bears its witness that true blessedness of life, true nobility of character, true human happiness, require *principle.*

What is principle? A large question, with only the possibility of a passing answer. What is principle?

Well, to act by principle is to guide life in obedience to well-ascertained and fundamental moral doctrines, come what may, just as you guide your pilgrim path in the dim twilight of the forests of Baden by the friendly stones which inexorably but wisely teach the track. To act on principle is to imitate the seaman who uses his compass on the wild Atlantic, and finds in it a friend and counsellor, valuable by night as well as true by day. The man of principle is as safe in his course as *he* is who can travel with wisdom, not merely when the human eye can register the landmarks of the journey, but when there is gloom and tempest, across the sullen swell or the fierce and angry tumult of the barren and the trackless sea.

What is principle? Principle is a formula of conduct above, beyond, apart from all merely passing circumstance; a concentrated and handy embodiment of necessary and productive truth; a formula which insures, if you are faithful in working out its conditions, a satisfying, a blessed result.

Taste and sentiment are ensnaring, are attractive; they send us in search of what claims to be *beautiful.* Principle is often hard, severe, uncompromising, cruel, but it starts us on the track of what is *true.*

III.

Now the Passion teaches us that *principle* must guide

a man to be true, to be useful, and further, it manifests the highest principles of a noble and a happy life.

Ah! my brothers, I would that ye were happy! I would that ennobling sentiments of a sacred earnestness possessed the thousands of souls that live and work in London. I heard yesterday afternoon of the death of a merchant in your city whom once I had known and respected, I had almost said—thinking of many near to him, dear to me—loved. He has died, and has left his mark behind. He had the kind of temperament, the tone of feeling, of a mediæval worker, that view of the meaning of a business life which marked the greater spirits in the best days of Florence. He recognised that your grand mart of commerce is a place of opportunity, a scene for glorifying God. Some of you surely recognise the stateliness of his theory of life; some of you are sorrowful at his death; that is, you are touched and moved and softened by the close of a career of commanding principle.

Now, what is the principle of the Cross? Principles are compact expressions of a broad view of duty. Life is short;—God to be glorified, man to be assisted, duty to be done; and Christ, taking such broad views as these, taking them not as theory, but as exacting certainties, acted upon them: "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him Who judgeth righteously." Ah! what does it mean? It means this:

first, that the noble and happy life negatively must depend upon the practical acceptance of such a maxim as, "Evil cannot be conquered by evil; it must be conquered by Good." Secondly, "Suffering is a *power* which is not to be evaded by recriminative vindictiveness, but *used* rightly as a sad but effective force for the victory of goodness." Thirdly, and positively; "The valuable part of man is the soul, the interior being, the central life;" "The great thought of man is God and His glory, and before the mind it must be left clear and consistent, not only in moments of enthusiasm, but in moments of a quiet life." Indeed Christ did supremely remind His followers that in the moment of death, consciously, as in the moment of life, He was face to face with God. And further, and surely, He taught that as God must be kept before us, and the value of the soul must never be forgotten, so "Man, as man, must be loved;" that we must live for our fellow-creatures, and in the sight of God. Gather up these principles; gather up the majestic teachings of the Passion; gather up, my brothers, the lessons of that lofty, that dignified, that suffering Humanity. What does it all mean?

IV.

I would that I could speak to you of Jesus, not for a moment, but for many moments; and in detail of the principles plain to be read in His victory of sorrow;

but, to summarise the greatness of His human life in a moment,—in one word, it means *self-sacrifice.* Gratify your passions, seek your self-advancement, please yourself; let men be self-interested; let women be affected and self-conscious,—your life is a miserable, a scorched, a fruitless life. Be self-sacrificing, forget yourself, put your foot upon this brute within you; conquer this self-seeking, rise into the inner sense of the spectacle of the Passion; feel that life is short, that man is glorious, that God in man must be glorified; live for God, live for your fellows, and you have learned,—I do not care where you stand,—in the London pulpit, or in the London office, or in the ranks of the soldier, or in the chambers of the lawyer,—you have learned the needed clew to the mystery of that great Humanity; you have learned the secret of a happy, because of a noble, of an ennobling life.

I add this word; your life and mine is short, and in that short time we have to act each our part in a solemn drama. Yes; remember it. Across the plains of Syria there have swept successive civilisations and the armies of successive powers; they have left their marks upon the rocks that rise above the Nahr-el-Kelb and on the peaks which dominate the great plain beneath Damascus: as they inflicted sufferings on a thousand hearts, they have left their memories in the history of human sorrow, but *they* are gone. Multitudes once swept across the plains, and traversed the ridges of the mountains;

but yesterday and to-day the rocks of Lebanon and the crests of Carmel rise unmoved in their unchanging dignity, while the conquerors who crossed them are gone. Nature, stern and lasting, is like a life of principle. Time is passing, years are advancing, happiness is fading, hopes are dying, interests lose their intoxicating stimulus, keen desires their exquisite sweetness,—they flit away like the ghosts of buried memories, vanishing amid the increasing shadows of advancing life; but like the line of Lebanon and the cliffs of Carmel, a life enriched by the revelations of the Crucified, a life lived in the power of principle, stands and will stand.

Even the noblest nature must suffer from a training in false principles. Yet, even though suffering, God guides through dangers and delivers in temptation, in so far as it is faithful to that highest principle; in so far as it is what we call "true to one's-self." The most powerful and popular romance of the day exemplifies *that.* Have you read "John Inglesant"? It is worth the reading. Yes, and even the simplest life is exalted by loyalty to lofty principles. Have you read the "Life of Charles Lowder"? I advise you to study it. Very different are the two, but they teach lessons which here and now cannot be expanded, but which you will understand. I cannot but think the hero of the romance great amid whatever failure, and often guided in perplexity because trying to be *true to himself;* and I am sure you will at least agree that the London clergyman left behind him

the memory of a noble and a blessed struggle; not because he gratified taste or was renowned for sentiment or culture, but because in view of the teachings of the Crucified he rose to the dignity of a self-denying life,—a life of principle.

I have done. Which, my brothers, which will you choose? Will ye choose a life of mere self-interest and self-seeking, and therefore, I add, of discontent? or will ye practise the science of goodness, possible, yes, possible for us all? You can practise it best in the power of that personal revelation with which age after age we are face to face in the story of Jesus Crucified. It is indeed a solemn choice.

> "Dona præsentis cape lætus horæ,
> Linque severa,"

says the Roman moralist. Grasp, grasp the gifts of the present, take what is pleasant, leave what is severe. Do it, coward, and you will be disgraced and conquered; despise it, brave man, in the spirit of the Crucified, and your life will be a happy one, even though hard.

Such is the Revelation of the Passion. Seek to do your duty, as you read it in the face of Jesus dying; realise the dignity of self-sacrifice, as you learn it from the Crucified. My brothers, we must question the Crucifix, we must act upon the answer. Sin, it teaches, is the one serious fact of our being. Repent, therefore, come to Christ, give it up, be saved. And then, my brothers, then, men of London, with this great city

around you to work for, to suffer for, to save,—then rise into a life governed by holy principle, denial of self, love to man, glory to God; and each of you, yes! each of you, may then be in tenderness and strength *alter Christus*, another Christ, to reproduce, to glorify the Passion; and each may at least leave behind you,—as the sunshine gilds with its fading splendour the reddening clouds,—each may leave behind the sweet, the touching, the moving memories of a sacred, an exalted, because a self-sacrificing life.

In some hour of rest in the National Gallery contemplate Greuze's picture of the little child, its head leaning upon its hand; pass from that picture to Rembrandt's self-painted portrait, in shimmer of light and shrouds of shadow; look on in the farther room at the small and beautiful St. Francis by Filippino Lippi, where throngs of angels stand tiptoe upon clouds and play their heavenly music in delight at sanctity; and you have a symbol of the stages of life's struggle from the waking to the end. In the child we have life startled and awaking; in the man the rugged face, testifying to struggle; in the saint memories also of severity, but of severity purified, glorified by entire self-forgetting, by the love of God.

We all, my brothers, must face in life a struggle; for us all it may be ennobled by the principle of the Passion. Let us be among those who are loyal to duty, who practise the science of goodness even to the extent

of suffering and sorrow, who when, doing all, they have failed to win the reward of reputation from their fellows, can commit, like their Master, what they have done in righteousness, to the judgment, to the unerring judgment of God.

SERMON IV.

THE WITNESS TO THE RESTRAINING PRINCIPLE.

The Witness to the Restraining Principle.[1]

"*Dost thou not fear God?*"—ST. LUKE xxiii. 40.

ONCE again, my brothers, once again, assisted by the crowding associations of your great Cathedral; and more, once again with what is better—with the tremendous memories of the sacred sufferings of our Divine Redeemer—once again, by the providence of God, we are permitted to enter under the sacred shrouds of the Passion; and once again we stand together within the subduing influence of the darkness and the shadow of death. Of death, too, my friends, we cannot fail to remember—presented in its most moving and the most startling example—the death of the highest of the human family, Him, too, Who, by a great and serious paradox, is also the living God.

I want you, my friends, to enter with me into this sacred precinct with a sense of hope, and thankfulness, and awe; with thankfulness for a Past, whose direct evils may be reversed, with all their sinister threaten-

[1] Preached first in substance in S. Paul's Cathedral, Passion Week, 1883.

ings, by the power of the Passion; with awe before a Present, big with possibilities of incalculable value; with hope for a Future in which we may yet, by God's help, be the masters of our destiny, in which we may gain an imperial sovereignty over the strange inconstancies of our rebellious wills. For such, my friends, such—let us remember it—are the fruits of the Passion. Yes, if these results are to be attained, it must be by the Passion of Christ. To make such fruits attainable—to help each one of you to make that attainment personal and powerful—this is my business now.

And, therefore, there are few who will not pardon me if I ask them at such a time, and once again, to question the Crucified. Further, in so doing, to deal with the real meaning of a serious truth, and to question the Crucified *in one sense.*

My brothers, if we do so, this sense is consonant with the spirit of our age. We live in a time when, if any fact be asserted, if any truth be stated, the voices of our generation, either in cynical scorn, or in materialistic unbelieving, or in heartbroken despondency, impatient (as ever with Englishmen), impatient of mere idealism, demand practical issues, and ask persistently, *cui bono*—"Where is the use of it?"

Now, the truth that you and I are bound to contemplate is the death of our Divine Redeemer—God and Man. Our question is asked honestly, and yet, I trust, in an entirely reverent spirit, so must be lucidly answered.

Well, any truth—even the most serious—stated, or any fact asserted with the intention of a practical issue, if good, will yield us a harvest of principles. For principles, my brothers, are nothing else than facts analysed into their constituent mysteries and motives, and then again, generalised for purposes of individual application in a handy form. And, therefore, if the Passion of our dear Redeemer be a fact, and be worth anything, it will give us principles of vital value. Let us ask ourselves, in our hurried moments through these few days, what handy principles for the lives of all of us are furnished by the witness of the Passion?

The text is the statement of a reproof of very courageous audacity, and it is a severe rebuke given under tragic circumstances. The man who spoke it had deeply sinned, and had been restrained in his sinning. What had startled, what had restrained him? He had seen the vision of Jesus crucified, and, as he gazed upon it, he had read something of its meaning, and had realised how dreadful it was to mock Him. He was shocked at his fellow-sinner's blindness in view of such a vision; had *he* seen it with the soul's eye, surely, he thinks, *he* too would have felt a power of restraint.

Yes, surely he would. So may we. We too, like the penitent malefactor, may, at Calvary, become the happy captives of an arresting, a restraining principle; a principle to be learnt by those who gaze on the vision

of the Passion: that restraining principle is, the Fear of God. "Dost not thou fear God?"

Yes, I say, what you and I have to do, in the first place, before the Crucifix, like the poor thief who spoke the great rebuke, what we have to do is to *think seriously.* Have you, have you read that story and *thought seriously?*

I.

The question is, Why? The answer is common, but not the less important. Because this principle must be learned by thinking seriously in view of the Crucified Christ.

My friends, a Spanish noble once watched by the corpse of a queen. He was alone, and it was midnight. The mortuary chapel was dim with shrouds of darkness, only made more evident by the pallid twilight born of flickering tapers; but the darkest drapery of the chamber was the presence of the dead. He had been gay, this nobleman, and light and frivolous; the opportunities of rank had conspired with the spring and the spirits of opening manhood. Like many among you, he had been careless about God, he had not thought seriously. That night he *thought* on the facts of the Past, the Present, the Future; he felt, by grace, the grasp of a restraining principle, a holy fear was upon him, he became a servant of God.

And we, some of us, have stood by the beds of the dying, or laid to their last resting all that remained of those we loved; we have seen the glint of the sun on grasses, which only meant for us a vanished presence, and an unforgotten grave; we have watched the shimmer of silver on the unresting sea by the open beach, or heard the piping wind that bent the leafless beeches, and the sobbing rain with pitiless persistence lash the wintry stones—all have spoken death and eternity; but a flash of *thought* has sometimes come in the word that was spoken, and the power of such a thought is to make us pause.

Or, possibly you think here is too much of sentiment; possibly you ask again the question of the English practical understanding—the *cui bono?*—even when face to face with the facts of another world. Ah! well, I think most of you are old enough to have stood on life's peaks of vantage, and watched with beating hearts, and eyes that gathered moisture, friend after friend pass by you in dim procession to the grave. Has not each said, "Pause and think—fear God"? Perhaps so. Have we allowed the thought to do its duty? Perhaps not. Impressions need retentive substance: the Spirit of God requires the co-operation of the human will.

"It is not the wind defies distance only;
'Tis not only the sun that gilds the day;
'Tis the spirit within us that lights the lonely,
And the wings of the soul they bear us away."

Some have known some of these experiences, most have known more; but *all* are called to consider the Passion of the Redeemer, and by *meditation* on that mystery each may acquire a restraining principle—the fear of God.

II.

And what is this fear?

This fear is a solemn dread of the creature in presence of the Creator. Well, then, with real thought on the Passion, why must we feel, as a prominent principle, a Fear of God?

(1.) The Cross, my brothers, witnessed to two things —God's awful and necessary judgments on human sin. It must be so. God could not be God if it were otherwise. The Atonement is nothing else but the fearful statement of Divine holiness in relation to sin.

Our first clear intimations of God, it has been truly argued, are not conclusions from reasoning on final causes, or evidences from the harmonies of a material world. No; they are the voice of conscience, and the self-evident consistency of the moral law. It is always possible to conceive, so it has been wisely said, all sorts of changes in the structure of the material world, and we find no difficulty to the intellect, whatever may be said about the imagination in the revelation of its final transformation by fire—that unimagined and yet inevitable catastrophe. But one thing is impossible,

we cannot conceive right being otherwise than right, and wrong than wrong; we cannot imagine created dissonances in the harmony of the moral law, and what is that but saying that there are eternal necessities in the being of our Creator? And if so, being good, His judgment must be severe, must be awful, on persistent sin.

We *say* so in our saner moments, but how are we to *feel* the truth of our saying? The answer is—Calvary. If God's judgments fell on the Representative of our humanity in such awful truth and severity, what does God think of sin? Yes, put God before you in the anguish of sorrow, face to face with human evil, then you have an answer how to feel yourself, who are subject to its corrupting influences, and hence a guiding, ay, a restraining principle. I repeat, if God's judgment upon Man's Representative is so frightful, oh! my brothers, let us—motes in a sunbeam, flies on a coach-wheel—let us learn to fear. "Dost thou not fear God?"

(2.) But this fear is also a serious apprehension of the dreadfulness of evil in itself. The Cross showed the intensity of the love of God, and, by the form of the revelation, was revealed his knowledge of our fearful danger. Men willingly face excessive pain only for high and valuable purposes. It has been said[1] that it is duration and continuance that make pain unbearable.

[1] *Mental Sufferings of our Lord.* Newman.

Now, Christ's suffering was a willing act; it was a complete, unbroken energy. He did not suffer by halves. He withdrew from His soul the sense of His Godhead that He might plunge in unrelieved, accumulated pain. But, then, all mankind have thought, have felt, how great, how blessed, how manlike, how divine, how stern, was that suffering; indeed, the awakening souls have felt the tender love and the inexplicable mystery of the Passion, and, wakening to this truth, have cried:

"Not for nothing, not for nothing, has the Eternal agonised!"

Oh, then, life is a serious business. Fear God.

(3.) Further, this fear is not weakening; if it restrains, therefore it braces. It is the mark of a rich and balanced nature, when face to face with facts, to act with a proportionate affection, because it is, in fact, a soul in submission to noble and ennobling truth.

Awful are the ridges of Monte Rosa; very awful, if the mountaineer climbs without the rope, or gazes down the precipice; alluring and deceiving are the slopes of the Schreckhorn; very solemn, my brothers, are the sounding streams, very gloomy the commanding cliffs in the Gorge of the Chartreuse.

The autumn afternoon is sad with resignation when the leaves are falling; sad too the dawn of the summer morning, but sad with a promise; the spring flowers come with inspiring hope, and the songs of little

children with the delight of joy. Nature has many voices, and to each the human heart has a responding echo; for nature is ever reminding man of his greatness and his decay, ever sounding the sad dirges of a brightness that must die; and amid her dirges she sings softly the song of life, and whispers a hint of Resurrection. And the true heart meets her. It is noble, it is ennobling to rise responsive to the object before us; to face facts with an affection to match. Now, the first affection of the soul which is proportionate to the Passion is the Fear of God.

The genius of Michael Angelo made the Sibyls splendid on the ceiling of the Sistine from the magnificence of proportion quite as much as from the softness of colour; proportion is the secret of lasting charm. It is holy fear that is the principle of proportion in the relation of the creature—the fallen creature—to his Creator. To see God in suffering is, by grace, to have a proportionate affection; by it we are restrained, by it we are awed and solemnised, by it we act as men should in the felt presence of their Maker, by it we learn, in fact, our proper place.

III.

The Passion, my friends, has half opened the gates of the grave, has half withdrawn the heavy shrouds which fold in mystery another life. From it we see

that we are sinners, *and* that we can be saved; that there is another world, and very near us, and that here we are on trial and in conflict simply to prepare for it; we see it as no dream-picture of the imagination, but as a fact of personal importance to us all. A consequence of this is the fear of God. Believe me, to fear God is the root of a noble and serious manhood; it is the inspiring principle of healthy and well-balanced earnestness in the conduct of life; for to fear God is to be restrained from sin. The man of business hesitates in a dishonest though customary transaction; the young man in submission to evil desire; the clergyman in betrayal of principle in obedience to the clamour of a godless world; the politician in trifling by his votes in Parliament with the ascertained enactments of the superior Lawgiver—if and when they each fear God. The fear of God! It makes short work of falsehood and egotism, for it frees the soul from the sway of wicked and worldly custom. It hinders men from considering themselves, their ways, their places, their beliefs and disbelievings as necessarily and quite satisfactory, and so it lays a stern arrest on our unbridled licence and cold-hearted worldliness. In matters of the soul's life it saves from a hesitating temper and vacillating will; it gives importance to religion, it bridles that insolent familiarity which often degrades modern spiritual exercises, and stimulates self-pleasing excitement which so often does duty for the worship of God.

It leads to the fulfilment of public obligation, and fosters private gratitude. It assists to those attainments which make and adorn a great character—noble self-denial and unswerving fortitude. It is the fount of serious and restrained devotion, it is the root of solid and lasting piety.

Yes, my brothers, it is the fear of God, learnt in reality at the Cross, which not only makes the other world a reality, but inflicts on man the necessity to act accordingly.

As the glow of a solemn sunrise gives to the tracts of impenetrable vapour a splendour which illumines and transforms, changing into awful beauty the cloud-folds of the slate-grey morning on the mountains which were otherwise but the draperies of a sulking storm; so the fear of God gives harmony and colour to the more murky cloudlands of the inner life. It is, it is indeed to each of us a distinct and necessary element in that solid and faithful perseverance to which and to which alone is promised the reward of victory.

Amidst the mysteries and miseries of this lower life; amidst its simple joys, its unspeakable sorrows; amidst the delirium of ambition, the intoxication of pleasure, the heart-corroding of daily care, the numbing frosts of encroaching worldliness, the blinding mists of severe temptations, we may be—if we will to realise its meaning—we may be arrested by the spectacle of the Passion; and among its fruitful and tremendous lessons, it

teaches restraint of the tempest of our lower desires, brings us some sense of the vast issues of eternity, and says to us in accents which we may hear above the surge of the surf and the breaking of the billows : "Look to your Representative; contemplate the dignity, the mystery of His sorrow; whether high in rank, or among (what the world calls) the dregs of society, whether with great gifts or with few attainments, walk as a creature in presence of his Creator; have a care what you are doing; live as those who live, but who have to die, or those who now in time must soon feel the pressure of eternity. Child, child of such an awful, such a splendid sacrifice—fear God."

SERMON V.

THE WITNESS TO THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE.

The Witness to the Guiding Principle.

"Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."—ST. LUKE xxii. 42.

THE fear of God, then, is a restraining principle, and we learn it at the Cross; but we have to remember that man, in the complex mystery of his nature, needs something more than restraint.

Life, my brothers, life is a journey. For the mind and for the spirit certainly there is movement, and there ought to be progress. Life is a journey not only beset with danger, but also, as we feel too bitterly at times, enshrouded in darkness. Life is a journey with its harassing perplexities and its bewildering vicissitudes, and each one of us is forced to acknowledge that the human spirit wants not merely a principle to restrain; it needs a principle to govern and to guide. Now, I submit that that guiding principle—if we read with attention the record on the scroll of the Passion—is to be found in trustful submission to the Will of God.

And this is brought out by a second aspect of the

Cross. For the Cross is not only a witness and a teacher; it *is* all that, *because* it is something more.

In the Passion of our Divine Redeemer we have an example, an example, too, in presence of which we need not quail under a sense of our entire unworthiness, for it is strictly human, and the perfection of its humanity is brought out by the shrinking, the natural, the necessary shrinking from pain.

But in the Passion we have also an instance of the most touching submission, of that high-minded dignity of character where the Will rises free, uncompromised by passion, unswayed by circumstance, undegraded by the dismaying vision of suffering, leading the whole nature through the darkness of its journey, because guided by entire submission to the Will of God.

I.

Here, then, here is a feature for *strict imitation.* How, let us ask, may we look for the light? In what quarter of the heavens in Life's night of darkness—darkness of sorrow, of struggle, of perplexity—in what quarter of the heavens may we watch for the rising of stars? Can we find an Orion, with his belt of gold, to give us our bearings as we make for the morning?

Pliny, from the peak of Misenum, on the night when Pompeii perished, saw the broad golden light to the

westward, which shone throughout the darkness of the destruction; but, in and above the darkness, he saw the coming, changeful glow that showed where the ship must steer. The light of a revealed and recognised future makes grim and real the prevailing darkness. But there are special lights *in* the darkness—lights, I submit, from the face of the Crucified—which show the point on which to *act*,—yes, my brothers, how to act.

Now, the question is purely personal. How may *I*—as distinct from the millions around me—how may *I* hope to know what is for myself the will of God? "Written in the sun," answers the infidel; "or, if not there, then not at all." Of course he means, that not being plain beyond possibility of question, you had better kiss hands to all hope of it, and bid it good-bye. But the man who says "there is no God," logically and intellectually, as well as spiritually, is always a "fool;" and, believing, you answer, "False." Why? Because if so, there would be no difficulty about it, and if no difficulty, then no education, no probation, no responsibility—that is, in fact, no dignity for man.

Surely, if there is one thing that we are bound to respect, it is the felt freedom for choice in the souls of men (may I say without rebuke for pardonable pride), especially of Englishmen. I mean, when man has wakened up to struggle, when he is roused to facts, what does he feel about himself? what does he desire? Does he discover that he is, or does he desire to be, a machine?

If so, certainly let him listen to the teaching of the infidel. Or, does he feel within him a power? does he desire to exercise the constituting element of his dignity? Then come nearer to the Cross. Here you find the Christian faith, my brothers, respecting facts, allowing for freedom, maintaining unhurt the conditions of responsibility, yet full of light, and strictly personal. For, if we study the Crucifix in its aspect of *example,* at the Cross we may follow Christ by close imitation, and find—though not without the pain of a Passion, if not in the search certainly in the application—a guiding principle. How then, you ask, how then, according to the teachings of the Cross, may I find the first gem in the belt of Orion? how may I watch the rising of the stars? how may I know for my own, my personal necessity, the Will of God?

(1.) Well, first, you have each of you the light of conscience. Each may say, "This, at least, is *my own;* there is nothing else in the world so near to me. It teaches me the Being of God, and, up to a certain point, it teaches me His character. If I listen carefully, and follow closely, its teaching grows clearer. It insists upon the reality of right and wrong. Wrong it dashes with the darkness of weird and awful light and shadow—weird as the *chiaroscuro* of Rembrandt, black as the backgrounds of Salvator—and shows it as manifestly SIN; it stretches beyond it a sorrowful landscape, with blurred, and indistinct, and dreary horizon, and assures

us of its illimitable CONSEQUENCES. It takes Right. It gilds it with colour, rich as the glow on the pictures of Titian, bright as the first unmingled radiance of the earliest southern dawn; it takes Right and shows it exalted into HOLINESS—points also in this direction to incalculable consequences, declares immeasurable possibilities of sanctity. It provides us with motive agencies, with a stock of hopes and fears. It may be frail, or faulty, or badly instructed; but it can be firm in its reassuring sentences, as well as appalling in its warnings of results, for it shows clearly enough the magnificence of duty, and to the act of deliberate disobedience it binds as tormentor the sense of guilt. It shows to each of us our direct relation to God; and, inasmuch as to be religious is to cultivate the science of that relation, it shows that for every serious being the first and chief duty is Religion. Conscience, my brothers, conscience, bright or dim, is one star in the belt of our Orion.

(2.) And again, there is the light flashed upon us by the teachings of Revelation. It matters not, for the moment, how you may be related to it. By an unfortunate, by a heart-breaking possibility let me suppose of one here that he is an Atheist. Well, after all, though Atheists are such idiots, such unfortunates as not to care for God, yet God is so loving and wise that He cares about Atheists; and so it is, that Atheist or Christian, we have each of us in this age had the

advantage, the very practical advantage of reaping benefits, because we have been born in an atmosphere of Christian thought. In this atmosphere we live. We must breathe it. We cannot altogether refuse it. The very conditions of civilisation prevent the most prejudiced and purblind of unbelievers from altogether securing himself against fresh air in the stifling chamber of his self-conceit. *Some* light has fallen upon us, do what we might to shut the shutters of the soul against it, ever since we were children. The "Holy Church throughout all the world," with her Apostolic Constitution, her sacred Ministry, her awful Sacraments, her lofty standard of Worship, her continual cry of Prayer; with her handing on of Truth from age to age, her guardianship of the Bible, and her voice of interpretation of its meaning for Man; in different climes, and adapting herself to different tempers—here, among us, presenting herself in her English garb to the minds of Englishmen, with many internal sorrows and much external trial, sometimes exalted, sometimes endured, sometimes laughed at, or persecuted, or scorned—still is ever witnessing to the sects who unhappily part from her, to the infidel, who, alas! disbelieves—witnessing to the fact of the Supernatural, to our relation and nearness to another world; above all, definitively stating the salient power of God's redeeming action, of His abiding presence by His Spirit, and of the dignity, the sanctity, the binding authority of the Moral Law.

Here, here most certainly, is a second star in the belt of our Orion.

(3.) And then we have Personal Experiences, of trials and sorrows, of joys and blessings, interpreted by such first principles, and composing a system of truth which the Christian faith names for us "the Providence of God." Here we may see, to quote a great teacher,[1] the "Hand of an unseen power," not only directing the physical and moral system as a system, but directing ourselves. We can see in these personal purposes, punishments and rewards. Hence it is, to borrow a suggestion from the same source, that to the undistorted mind of the many this is clear in maxim style:—

> "Honesty is the best policy."
> "Pride precedes a fall."
> "To the pure all things are pure."

What do they mean? Interpreted, writ large by the light thrown upon them by serious meditation and revealed truth, they are concentrated expressions of a large human experience of the watchful and powerful Providence of God; and to *each* mind all this is clear also if we *will* to do His will.

"If we will to do His will." What is this but to say that submission is the guide of life?

II.

My brothers, I do not say—let the infidel make the

[1] Newman. *Grammar of Assent.*

most of the admission—I do not say you can read God's will in the sun of noonday, but I do say the Watchman of the Night can discover this My belt of Orion. And if you perceive *each* glimmer of light, and find in *all* a guiding principle, then the question is, To what does it guide?

There are three immediate consequences, and there is a final result. What are these?

(1.) The principle of the Agony implies a *life of labour.*

The sunlight plays upon the gleaming leaves in autumn as they bend to the breeze, or dances with innumerous laughter on the sheets of the briny spray; but when the sun has sunk, the ocean is there in its solemn majesty; and when the summer day has drooped and perished, the storm is strong. The great waters, not the spray, bear the ocean vessel; the strong wind, not the whispering breeze, fills the sail. A religion of feeling is little more than the play of truth on the nerves or sensibilities; a religion of enthusiasm little else than a passing spasm. The religion that guides a soul in the life-battle is a religion of conflict. To be guided by God's will means an "agony," a conflict, a life of labour. Remember, yes, remember, if you follow the religion which is taught in the garden of the suffering, you must labour. Remember, oh remember, that there are hard things before you which have certainly to be done. Yes, the religion of the Crucified is the religion of

hard work. To do the will of God means that you are to enter into conflict; for it means, certainly, it means you are to deny yourself. To take God's will as guide means to do your duty, when duty is hard and exacting, cost what it may.

To the young man who faces life in London it is hard, but it is possible to be pure. To the merchant who is determined to be honest in a commercial world of feverish competition, God's will as a guide, at times at least, may mean serious sacrifice. To the lady of fashion; to the dutiful mother in a large household; to the toiling sempstress in the shop; to the daily governess; to the hospital nurse; to the over-taxed clergyman; to the high-minded physician; to the politician, with the grave difficulties of conflicting national traditions; to the struggling workman in the artisan's shop, who rises early and goes to bed late, that he may earn enough to keep, or funds to educate, his children; to the ordinary working lad in the streets of London,—for every one of these, and to multitudes more (whom I cannot name, for time is wanting), there is required—if they are dutiful, if they are religious—sterling principles, and earnest endeavours; for all such, God's Will means weariness, or loneliness of spirit, or misunderstanding, or sacrifice of reputation; and these things, my brothers, I beseech you to remember, these things are not written in rose-water.

Yes, it is labour; but labour, thank God, thank the

Crucified, exalted, ennobled by the vision of an imperishable example, with a spring of elastic vigour, with all the power that comes from an increasing sense of Eternity.

(2.) And again, the principle of the Agony means, undoubtedly, *sorrow;* but the sorrow of the Apostle at Corinth, "of a godly sort." For this high sorrow is no sickly sentiment. No; it is the pain of the soul: it is the reactionary shiver of the immortal spirit under the shock of its touch on the things of Eternity when beset with the dangers of Time; it is the fainting of heart in the vision of blessedness, amid facts of failure and struggles of a life of toil; it is the sense of a high ideal too painfully unachieved. More: it is the Being of the creature in darkness indeed, but with a prospect of the sunlight, and a memory of the glory, conscious, amid whatever gloom, that the light of the one is the harbinger of the other; it is Sorrow with Hope.

In the depths of the Pass of the Splügen the rocks rise high and precipitous, and are crowned with crags; in the dark night the mountain oak and ilex cling to the crannies of the clefts, and moan with the wailings of the wind; the waters rush below, tormented like unresting spirits in pain; the tortuous pathway vexes with its windings, and seems never to lead to an ending, and only to threaten death; the moon breaks out from the mass of storm-clouds, the path, though dim, is evident; the rain may pelt, and the wind

may lash you, but you are rising; the path may be tracked to the crest of the mountain—in fact, you are nearing the dawn.

In the upper heights of the Roman Campagna the stream dashes on in a sunlight chequered with shade; darker and darker close the rocks around it, thicker hangs the russet of the brushwood, nearer twine the boughs of the gnarled trees; it seeks the Ponte Sodo, dim, rock-crowned, dismal; but it carries a sunlight on its bosom, and onward it dashes to the sunlight, and then, leaping and laughing from its dangerous journey, it rushes with the Cremera rejoicing to the sea.

In the Scuola di San Rocco stands a Titian—the fairest vision of Christ—the eye speaks of pain unspeakable, and the head fails with the anguish of the thorns. And close by, in the Accademia, is the Madonna and Child; but there is a light on both the faces which arrests the gazer—brightness amid darkness—the light of a higher life. Such is the Christian's sorrow, illumined by submission to God. It always has the promise of a purpose working to an end.

Yes, there is labour and sorrow—labour, because at all costs you must do your duty; sorrow, because you feel, feel often and acutely, feel all the more, the less the feeling is literally justified, your failure before your great ideal. But the outcome of labour takes the sunshine like the Pala d'Oro in the evening light at Venice,

and the sorrow has a blessed and a penetrating influence, and a meaning and a message all its own.

(3.) And, I add, most assuredly this principle gives *peace.* Surely, even though you make what the world calls a *fiasco,* still, striving to do His Will is acting on the common sense of eternity, and *that* brings peace. For peace is the harmony of the spirit with its object and its life; and to be guided by the Will of God into submission and effort, is to have a soul in deepening communion with its source and its end.

III.

Swiftly I must add; to follow such a principle, what is the result? Is it at last to know the Truth? Certainly. "They that do His will shall know." Is it to stand on the heights of freedom? Truly. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." These are *attainments,* but what is the *result?* My friends, it is the secret of I hope a not uncommon, but certainly a most unearthly character—strong, yet tender; earnest, yet sunny; eager, yet self-restraining; patient, yet full of power. The character in which there is proportion; which is growing in real greatness, because elevating all little things into high and heavenly uses; the character, God-like, yet "like Euripides the human"—

> "With his dropping of warm tears,
> And his touch of all things common,
> Till they rise to touch the spheres:"

which knows the secrets of Eternity; which curbs vain ambitions, and annihilates the wasting of discontent; which is, in fact, expressing a Will that is "our sanctification;" which is the destruction of moral ruin and the hinderer of spiritual decay; which is the conqueror of Death the destroyer, and the fertiliser of bereavement, of disappointment, of separation, and the producer of life from the grave; which ennobles everything and everybody it touches, for it helps itself and helps other people to live as Man should live, to live for God.

O Will of God! strong and supporting, sharp and exacting, terrible and strange! leading over rough stones and through dark and bewildering mazes, but leading us to our rest. Have you courage, brave men, to accept it? Can you take it as your guide? What? You hardly venture on the audacious love of the eager Apostle? your self-distrust is holding you? you fear to say, "We can"? Well, I beseech you, gaze on that stately figure, whom we Christians love and worship, gaze on Him in the Garden of the Agony, and pray, pray for grace to adopt His principle of struggle, and for grace to persevere. Pray, and it will be given; pray, strive, brave soul, in union with the Crucified, for that great resolution of surrender. "If Will must guide, if Will must govern, if Will be indeed the sovereign faculty, then, my God, not mine but Thine."

SERMON VI.

THE WITNESS TO THE ENNOBLING PRINCIPLE

The Witness to the Ennobling Principle.

"*While we have time let us do good unto all men.*"—GAL. VI. 10.

THE words of the text, my brothers, express for us a maxim straight from the Cross. And a maxim is to a principle what a principle is to a far-reaching series of truths; it is its handy compendium, its short and serviceable statement.

We have seen that, from the Passion of our Master, we may learn a restraining principle—the fear of God; we may learn also a guiding principle—submission to His will. *Now*, I desire to remind you that it is our duty to contemplate the revelation of a fertilising principle by which life, the life of each, may be made no selfish struggle, but a pilgrimage, of which the experiences and the sorrows may be full of blessings for other people and ourselves.

Life, my brothers, as we have seen,—life is a journey; but it is not only a journey, life is also a work. The best efforts of the human spirit spring from the energy of an artist toiling at himself. And just as Van Eyck, or Memling, or Dürer, each pos-

sessed "the sacred science of colour," each noted faithfully the teachings of experience, each rose into some vision of a better country, drew down the results of that vision to the practical purposes of daily life; and neither neglected the claims of the present nor forgot the solemn certainties of another world; so the Human Spirit, alive to its responsibility, and therefore to the need of sorrowful toil here, without the reminding of the preacher, hears voices like passing bells, now loud, now dying; sounds tossed up in sorrowing cadence, surging and solemn, mystical and threatening, like the roll of the Atlantic in the caves of Cornwall; or tender and saddening, like the water of the spreading surf on the sands of the Adrian Sea; and the voices, whether loud or soft, whether threatening or tender, are chanting an unchanging story: "Death is coming, diligence and fortitude; Life is passing, use it while you may." Listening to these the human spirit works in the vision, with the sense of eternity; unites the ideal and the practical, strives to make idealism into realised result, does not merely travel a destitute journey, nor work a work fruitless to others as well as self, but exercises in the highest of all subjects, with the possibility of the most lasting results, exercises an artist's powers.

My brothers, this is the prayer of the text, and the teaching of the Cross: "While we have time, let us do good." While the Cross in one aspect is a witness, it

testifies to the need and the grounds of the fear of God; in another aspect it is an example, it teaches us, yes, most certainly, it teaches us that we must follow the example of that most holy life, and govern ourselves by the known will of God. But read now from another point of view; the Cross is *a revelation*, and a revelation which opens to us the significance of a moral secret, the secret of the How to live a noble life—a life rich in blessing and lasting in result. The true spiritual artist must learn that secret. True, he accumulates as he learns, various teachings of specific duty, but these are, to use the language of chemistry,—these are *precipitated* into a principle by the Cross. That principle is indeed familiar in word to all of us, but we may well recall it again with energy and purpose, the ennobling, the fertilising principle is something like entire Self-Sacrifice.

I.

Let us note swiftly some of the characteristic features of the self-sacrificing temper, the productive principle of a noble life.

(1.) First we may note what is negative. In a really self-sacrificing temper there is the absence of that miserable taint and bane of rich and gifted natures which the Greeks would describe as a withering ὕβρις —an insolent scorn. We should seriously remember

that to exercise a self-sacrificing temper implies some clearness of vision, and as the sight of eternal things becomes clearer, and the meaning of the Cross plainer to the spiritual understanding, the soul is in serious danger of imagining that the gifts it has received from God are its own acquired possessions, the natural results of its own persistent toil. Yes, the last temptation of even holy souls is spiritual pride, and the man who is capable of sincere self-sacrifice may be tempted at last to advance the science of goodness here, and the kingdom of Christ, so to speak, *de haut en bas.* It is possible, therefore, to descend from the heights of self-sacrifice into the valley of self-seeking. It is possible in view of life's abundant disappointments; possible, after struggles to do your duty to others, to sink into a paralysing mood of dogged pessimism, to enwrap one's-self in a robe of self-inspiring despondency; to preach high principles with a heart no longer loving, but despairing; to preach without even a hope, and at last with scarcely a care for their fulfilment; to cling almost defiantly to a lofty standard with a contemptuous despair of human nature. Souls so misguided are tempted by their own well-doing to imply others' wrong, to stunt their spiritual growth, to scare and paralyse the humble or self-mistrustful or weak. These are they who make what might have been "Songs in the Night"—to console, to encourage the fainting—into the selfish wailing of the weary, and the saddening dirges of death. These are they who become, from be-

ginning with a high ideal, become the self-tortured victims of a scorching scorn. Believe me—ah! believe me—the true child of the Cross learns, as he advances, a patient toleration; the spirit which descended to him from the crucifix has a mellowing influence like the lessons of increasing years, for it is a spirit rich in an infinite experience; it does not allow him to compromise principles, but it does compel him to allow for the weakness of human nature, and for the variations of opportunity, for the greatness of temptation, and for the need in many a fellow-creature to wait patiently for the slow lessons of the years; it inspires him, when faithful to it, with that just moderation of thought and speech which is the result of a true view of the greatness, the worth, and the difficulty of a lofty ideal; the result of a will habituated to restrain the powers of Being within the frontiers of reality; the result of the receiving, in fact, the grace of a sincere humility (which is, in truth, reality) into a soul which thus does not delude itself as to facts about itself and God. The self-sacrificing spirit, believe me, will not lose faith in human nature; will learn for itself simple-hearted sincerity; will not demand too much from others; will "possess" itself "in patience," and thus lay a stern arrest upon the too natural encroachments of ὕβρις—of insolent scorn.

(2.) Another mark of a self-sacrificing temper is a sincere, a supernatural, a gentle yet chastened sorrow. "Sorrow!" you say; "why, that is nothing so strik-

ingly exceptional. A short experience of the most shallow observer says "there is plenty of sorrow! It requires no special gaze on eternity, it demands no yearning desire for a higher life, to find one's-self plunged in the mystery of sorrow." Quite so; but stay. There are violets *and* violets. The violet of the bleak hedgeside on the edge of the windy common, cramped with the crisping frost and shrivelled by the withering storm, is generically the same, but in individual fact how different from those rich masses of unfathomable colour which carpet the ruined pavement of Hadrian's Villa. So there is sorrow *and* sorrow. There is the sorrow of a broken life, the sorrow of a greedy, unsatisfied desire, the sorrow of a degraded moral purpose, *and* the sorrow of a brave and tender soul, which sees the beauty of the ideal and the sadness of partial failure, and yet, though sorrowing, does not faint or grow weary; which realises the possibility of human progress, and is heartstricken at the spectacle of men with gifts of noble nature living for the changeful and passing, when they might live for what can never die.

Believe me, it may be seen, it has been seen in the lives of the holy, in the faces of the blessed when on earth whom some of us have known. These are they who walk the world's dusty ways, and in the glare of its sunlight, and yet have before them not a gloom, but a shadow—wonderful, beautiful—"the shadow of

the Cross." *This* sorrow is an outcome of the self-sacrificing temper. Is it yours? Are you sorry when wrong is done? sorry at the record of wretchedness and the chronicle of crime? sorry at lives with possibilities of glory falling into the depths, missing *the* standard, the example of Christ? Is yours such sorrow as stimulates you to read and obey the secret of this unearthly loveliness? Is your soul's life touched into activity by the tragedy of human misery and the tragedy of the Cross? Blessed are ye if it be so. Then it is the principal anxiety of your life, to enrich the lives of others. *This* is the Witness of Self-sacrifice.

(3.) And a third feature of such a temper is a sunny earnestness. What is earnestness? It is not gloom, it is not grim determination, it is not dogged persistence, it is not revolting narrowness, or wearying one-sidedness, or stupid and tormenting fanaticism. What is earnestness? Earnestness is that temper of mind, that habit of thought which comes of taking, of habitually taking, the truths of eternity as realities, as in fact they are. Earnestness knows nothing of "notional;" it is connected with "real assents." Earnestness will not name angels as a child would fairies, or heaven as the Greek poets would talk of the Land of the Lotus, or the City of the Clouds. Earnestness cannot separate facts into categories, according to their size and their fashion, but only according to their motives and their eternal consequences. Earnestness sees the substance

of things, not the accidents; it values the soul and the character, not the fashion or the title. Yet there is an earnestness that, doubtless, becomes at times grim and forbidding. Beware of this. It is possible that the earnest man may think so much of the things of Eternity as to disparage the duties of Time—possible for him to forget that all God's gifts are not (if I may so say) directly religious gifts, but are also natural and individual—possible that for him Art and Science, and power and beauty, and the delight and humour of young hearts, and the revelations of poetry and the voices of song, because these *have* been touched with the trail of the Serpent, may seem necessarily and evidently bad. Alas for him! Then he loses the heart of a helper, the God-shared Spirit "out of darkness to bring light;" so frightened is he at the licentiousness of the Cavalier, that he throws himself headlong into the repulsive Pharisaism of the Roundhead.

My brothers, true earnestness remembers that Nature is not to be choked, but to be chastened and trained; that not the possession of desire but its unregulated sway is a sin; that *it* is a gift to be educated and restrained. Earnestness, true earnestness, will not be morbid and morose, for that is selfishness; it will exert itself to win and to reform. If, indeed, it is serious, and even solemn (for is not life so?), it is also beautiful, it is sunny. Serious yet full of sunshine as the masses of marching clouds are solemn and beautiful above the

crags of Engelberg when the sun is westering, bright even though awful, as there is an awful yet dazzling splendour in the cloud-fragments above Florence to the gazer from the Apennines after a night of storm. Earnestness, indeed, implies awe and a sense of life's tragic sorrow; but *this* earnestness has a touch of the sunlight, for it is the outcome of a heart thrilled with the spirit of the Crucified, realising facts, banishing self, not indeed forgetting the reality, but none the less alive to the nearness and the unutterable beauty of another world. Such, such are at least some of the trademarks of Eternity which stamp and distinguish Self-sacrifice; and these and this are to be learnt from the Cross.

II.

Let us ask, then, what ground can be shown for cultivating a spirit of Self-sacrifice?

(1.) My brothers, first, unquestionably first, a loving gratitude. Christ died for you; Christ, the ever Blessed; Christ, the perfect Man, and also the Eternal God. If you have a grain of gratitude in you for the highest blessings, act by grace towards Him in the spirit in which He has acted towards you.

(2.) And another ground is a wise and gracious estimate of the dignity of man. Man is an animal; yes, but man is also a spirit; mysterious instincts within him—despite the passing crotchets of sciolists and

dreamers—witness to him his immortality; and when you look—as I look to-day—upon your fellow-men in thousands, and remember that each is, in the essential powers of his being, an expression of the thought, the unbeginning thought, of the Eternal God,—*then* you cannot fail to be overwhelmed with the horror of such an one falling into wilful failure, cannot fail to be struck with the blessedness of his possibilities of glory; and then—such is the solidarity of the family of man—you cannot fail to awake to the thought that the achievement into actual fact of such possibilities depends in some measure on yourself; and so to awake is to rouse you (is it not?) into some effort to "do good unto all men," to draw you into obedience to the invigorating, the ennobling principle of a self-sacrificing life.

III.

And now for the result. Self-sacrifice is the ennobling principle. It ennobles the world, it fertilises the soul.

How? For all men it leaves behind rich memories and great examples; it shows thus, what man *can*, and therefore what man *ought*, to do, and encourages to use the strength God gives to do it. Surely, surely, in life's weary warfare blessed is the inspiriting, the invigorating power of holy example.

And again, it enriches the individual soul. It is strange, yet it is true, that to *give* in love increases the store of love within us; strange, but true, that self-love weakens the moral fibre and impoverishes life; strange, but true, that self-sacrifice stores moral treasures, and produces moral power.

My brothers, when you and I come to die, we shall realise how little that *seemed* our property is in fact our own; yes, when we have "passed through the body and gone," they will strip from off us the garments of our daily pilgrimage; and when a few short months, perhaps, have fled, these will be followed to the regions of mouldering forgetfulness by the robes of our reputation and our name among men. Believe me, all that we possess, represented by the balance at our banker's, or by the reputation we have in the current talk of our contemporaries, or the sweet and kindly love of those who make too much of us—these things, *in themselves*, as regards eternity, are less than nothing. We must part company with them, though not with our responsibility for them, when we have crossed the grave; but what lasts, what lasts when Time is over and Eternity begun, is just those possessions of righteousness which by grace in love and sorrow and self-sacrifice we have made our own. To sacrifice self, to give brain, and heart, and time, and money, and strength, and affection, and sympathy, and pity to others for the sake of Christ, this is to be like the living God, this is to follow in the

footsteps of Him who redeemed us, this is to acquire moral property, this is in a word to possess and use the enriching, ennobling principle of the Christian life.

IV.

"While we have time let us do good."

What is life then but a severe probation to test the metal of our souls, and prove their value?

"While we have time let us do good."

Nay, what is life then but a careful education, wherein stern circumstances and trials—the calls of duty, and the sharp assaults of sorrow combine, or may combine with inward principle, to train the soul, to "try us and turn us forth sufficiently impressed."

"While we have time."

Nay, what is life but a great opportunity, though an opportunity not perhaps to leave behind the rich results of patient and daring investigation, or the astounding stores of accumulated knowledge, yet something better? No, my brothers, we are not great scientists, or powerful thinkers, but life is meant for us to leave behind us, acts and thoughts of self-sacrificing goodness whose power and blessedness never pass away. No, never.

The clouds of sunset are bold and flaming on the storm-disturbed horizon of the western ocean. They fade, they pale into the ashen twilight, or they are

drenched and drowned in the darkness of the night; they can leave but a shadowy memory behind.

The gale-driven spray wreathes itself into festoons on the crisping sea-weed, and gleams with the hue of the iris, as it is scourged into scattered fragments by the lashes of the pitiless wind. It is but a flash of light, a gleam of glory, and it is gone. So the life of self-sacrifice, illuminating the horizon of tempest, leaves a memory, forewarns of a future.

The life of self-sacrifice may be lashed by the gales of exacting duty, may seem to guide—like the torch-bearers on the sarcophagi of Etruria—to guide in the end to the grave; but it leaves in many an indestructible memory, and for all a message. Blown like the seed on the mountains, it clings in the crannies and springs into a tree; it fertilises the records of human history, it makes natures brave who were shivering in despondency; it grasps and clings to the very heart of the Redeemer, and in eternity, when time has passed and faded and is forgotten, the self-sacrifice of a life,—the enriching principle—will make splendid and happy the paradise of God.

Oh, my brothers, are you exercising it? Are you trying to live in the power of it? Will you not follow its lead "while you have time"? While you have time! for death is coming; while you have time! for labour will find its ending; while you have time! for this, this passing moment, is your great opportunity.

Blessed, blessed are they who do not live for wealth,

or for reputation, for the delights of ambition, or for the intoxications of pleasure. Blessed, blessed are they who make men happy, because they make them good; who help young hearts to be pure, struggling men to be high-minded; who take religion not as a farce, but as a reality, not as a stimulus to enthusiastic feeling, but as a principle and power of practical life; who feel that they are artists working on their own souls, working at the souls of others; who know that "the time is short," and the night is coming, and who have determined—and I beseech you if ye have not, then *now* by grace determine,—who have determined that high principles, and lofty purposes, and sincere self-sacrifice, and quiet duty, and faithful effort, and the sunlight of a bright and a loving spirit shall help this poor sin-laden sorrow-stricken world into a better brighter future; who have determined that they will try to impress upon others the greatness and the goodness, and the love and the mercy of their Redeemer; that they will do their best —and if by grace you do your best, do you think, in the judgment day, God will ask more of you?—do their best to bring men to their Saviour by bringing out before them the self-sacrifice of the Crucified, and so advancing the kingdom of Christ.

"While we have time." What does our age need? Knowledge? It is "maw-crammed." Discoveries? No, we have been scraping at the earth, and dissecting the hills, and analysing the waters, and measuring

the winds and spying out the stars, till the soul grows dizzy, and fancies itself creative; and then we begin to find the need, when staggering in our giddiness, to rest on some supporting prop, and fall into our proper place.

No, not so. What men want is strength and consolation. The idlers are killing time; the "victims of a lazy Reason" have invented a new name for an old enemy, they will take no responsibility for conclusions in believing or disbelieving, but lie at ease like the gods of Epicurus in *Agnostic* indifference. At ease! Beneath is a gnawing of unsatisfied desire. And the workers! For them days of weary labour are followed by nights of distressing lassitude; their rest must be sought in excitement, and the excitement of a restless age means too often sin. And religion! Religion herself has taken to piping in strange tones in hope that they will dance, or to mourning in seductive measures to induce them to lament. The old faith will not do! No, we must now have Improvement without Penitence, and a strange "salvation" apparently from punishment not from sin, a salvation through mental athletics, and interior gymnastics, and confident assurance that whatever becomes of others *we* are "saved;" not the salvation of a soul regenerated by the Spirit as God's child in baptism, called back to its Father when it has strayed, in solid conversion; strengthened by prayer and the Bread of Life when

weak and weary; and growing in grace, and by watching and prayer, persevering, through the merits and gifts of the precious Blood.

What does the age want? Strength to withstand temptation, consolation to save from the blank of despondency, and the blasphemy of despair; and believe me, believe me, servants of Christ, you can contribute to the meeting of this agonising want, when waking up to realise all your Redeemer has done for *you*, you bring to bear on others the unearthly wealth and loveliness of that life of Kindness and that death of Redemption; when you set Him forth gently, really, earnestly, in your own circle of work, in your own path of opportunity, by the self-sacrificing goodness of a holy life.

While you have time! The days are travelling on, the night is coming, let us bestir ourselves to assist in the triumph of goodness, let us act in self-sacrifice, and so let us advance—oh! blessed opportunity—advance the kingdom of Christ.

SERMON VII.

THE WITNESS TO THE SUSTAINING PRINCIPLE

The Witness to the Sustaining Principle.

"*For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame.*"—HEBREWS xii. (part of) 2.

LIFE, my brothers, life is a journey; but life is something more. Life is a work. It is the great opportunity for the artist who is toiling, by divine assistance, at the world outside him; *because*, first, he is toiling at his own soul. And so the human spirit needs restraint as it stands half dazed, half delirious on the giddy heights of a grave temptation. And further, because life is not only beset with danger, but also encircled with darkness, it needs the strong hand of a faithful guide. More, if it is to reap rich results—results to the world, in the addition of an example that each one of us may and ought to bequeath to those that follow, results to the soul itself in accumulating moral power,—it needs a fertilising principle. Well, so far we have found, my friends, (have we not?) what is wanted in the fear of God; in submission to His will, and in, at least, such poor attempts as may be ours towards lofty and severe self-

sacrifice. Now there comes a further question which we are bound to confront to-day. Yes, you say, granted a restraining and a governing, and a fertilising principle taught by the Dying Redeemer: what is to give the stimulus necessary to persevering faithfulness? Can this too; can this stimulating and sustaining principle, can it be found at the Cross?

My brothers, it is my business—as it is my delight, because I believe it is strictly true—to say that *it is.* The answer indeed is plain, it is stated in the text. The Man of Sorrows—it is a strange paradox, but it is a fact—the Man of Sorrows supplies us with the sustaining principle, *anticipated joy.*

Joy! Have you ever thought of the beauty and greatness of this principle in the soul? Meditate for a moment now.

Joy, my brothers, joy has a depth and a stillness far beyond mere merriment. Joy has a moral force, because it rises out of and combines real and constituent spiritual elements, loftier, more enduring than pleasure; it draws its life and gathers its strength from the most vigorous and the most varied faculties of our nature. Its very roots are watered,—*it* is watered at the roots of its being, by streams the combined results of drops from the spring of laughter, as well as from the fountain of tears. Like the pines of Ida, it takes the sunlight bravely, because it has been strengthened by the storm; it turns the troubled tempests of life into

stirring music; it compels its lighter cares to sing; from sorrow it brings a happy cadence—sad yet happy —like the ψιθύρισμα (psithurisma), the soft low whisper of Sicilian pines. Look again, look again, as the traveller may have turned in parting and gathered new truths from the rapt meditation of the Sophocles of the Lateran or the divine astonishment of the Dresden Madonna—turn again, look once more at spiritual joy.

It possesses the secret of all that is bright and beautiful in Nature, all that is divine and ennobling in Art —these when it pleases it can use. In its countenance is the innocence of childhood, in its strength of energy the vigour of the full-grown man: in it is the delight and astonishment of the voices of awakening birds, the freshness of opening flowers, the elasticity of early youth, the brightness of the breeze in spring-time, and the charm without the sorrow of the dawn. Spiritual joy! We linger about it, find it hard to leave it, as we linger not to lose one ray of beauty when the clouds of sunset are unclasping their draperies of crimson to wrap themselves in the sable robes of storm. Joy! It co-ordinates and harmonises all rays of moral glory; it has the sweetness and freshness of the music of Mendelssohn; it touches with the chromatic tenderness of Spohr; it unites the depth and splendour of the colouring of Titian, and the refinement and severity of Francia's Christ. If, if indeed it can be found in the face of the Crucified, it can be no silly, no evanescent sentiment,

no bodiless imagination, no passing spasm; no, it is a power.

Yes, a soul in spiritual joy is a soul in possession of a power, not hard, crushing, adamantine, but enriched with energetic life—on the side of man, an outcome of unfaltering loyalty to truth and duty, on the side of the Undying, a bequest of the Crucifix, one exquisite result of the delicate, the finished workmanship of the Spirit of God.

Joy! and the Crucifix! Yes, it has its roots, remember, in a rugged soil.

Travellers in the Tyrol, so an able writer tells us, noticed in the distance the crest of the mountains cinctured with a girdle of vivid blue. Was it an effect of reflection? Was it a trick of the sunshine at play with the shadow? Was it a mirage, a magic deception, worked up by the mist and the light and the winds? Would it pause at the approach of invading footsteps, or would it—as all beautiful things in this low world—would it fade and be gone? They drew on, and found it not fainter, but clearer, not vanished, not gone, no trick of the sunlight, no passing effect of the cloud; it was a belt of vivid gentians, drawing strength from the rugged rock and unsympathising stone, taking the light and outfacing the heavens with the intensity of its burning blue.

Now, such is the Joy of the Spirit. Beautiful; not vanishing, but vigorous; anticipating what it knows to

be certain, the final victory of Truth and Righteousness, having, therefore, its roots in "eternal things."

This, too, this is preached from the Cross; hence, my brothers, what looks like a streak of sunlight on the unrestful ocean becomes a stimulating and sustaining principle in the labour of life.

II.

This, then, may become the stimulating principle of a persevering life, and the question is, How can it be learned? The answer is found in the twofold aspect of the Cross.

(1.) If we catalogue the various departments of the subject-matter of our Redeemer's joy, we find in the Cross a revelation. It reveals the Mystery of the Atonement. I do not desire to deny that around that awful fact are many difficulties, or at least many truths in shadow, as the clouds that float around and darken the mountain's crown; otherwise, indeed, it would not be a mystery,—*i.e.* a truth, but dark-veiled. No, do not deny it; but look steadily at what is revealed. First, the Atonement meets a felt need of man's nature, the need—say what men may—of pardon and expiation. Again, in this revelation we see there is no severance—God forbid—in the Divine Will, no separation, as men misrepresent it, between the Will of the Father and the Son, but that the Atonement for the creature is the result of the one

living, loving Will of the Three Subsistences or Persons in the Holy Trinity. And, again, the revelation teaches us that the Atonement was an act of willing self-sacrifice on the part of the Eternal Son; and so, when you consider the Mystery of the Atonement in the light of the Cross, there is in it no room for injustice—as has been before now wrongly imagined. But a mystery it is, beautiful, wonderful, bringing life out of death, as spring flowers are the children of the winter, and forming the subject-matter of our Redeemer's joy. Its results are the sources of delight to the Undying. He had joy—sustaining Him amid the pangs of His Passion—joy at the thought of saving our souls.

(2.) And the Cross is an example. Speaking morally, it springs (as surely you must realise) directly out of the self-sacrificing temper, gains, in fact, its unselfish colouring there, teaches us what is *the* temper, the prevailing atmosphere needful for a useful life.

There is a pretty story told of Raffaelle Sanzio, by one who does not always work so worthily—how, toiling as a child in his Urbino mountains, the little face grew pale as the months of spring danced into the days of summer, and the green leaves of the vine and the olive faded into the autumn of russet and gold; still he laboured on to finish a work by an appointed day. The day of decision came, and the child was victorious, and the tiny artist face—destined to glow hereafter with the sunshine of unearthly visions—was

flushed with pleasure, and the little craftsman's hand, which held the secret of a hundred Madonnas, which by and by was to make the loggia of the Vatican a storehouse of sacred history—was trembling and cold with joy, not for his own sake, but because he had helped another.

This was beautiful, but we know of no self-denial so personal to ourselves, so complete and lasting, as the self-denial of the Cross; and we read in the joy of the Conqueror not only the principle which stimulates His endeavour, but also the evidence of His love. He had a delight, indeed, not, to use a modern phrase, "in influencing the masses," but in saving you and me.

(3.) And another subject-matter of that joy—we dare to say it, because His Apostle taught us to do so—was the crowning in Himself of human perfection—the vindication of goodness. He was "perfect through suffering." Goodness! the greatness of doing right; the greatness of a self-subdual, of obedience to conscience, of devotion to duty, of faithfulness to principle. Goodness! the greatness of doing what you ought to do; goodness, the greatness of loyalty amid sorrow; goodness, the greatness of devotion to duty; goodness, the dignity of the lonely soul that perseveres in what it sees to be true, and feels to be right; goodness, that one single science that all of us may work at, not without many a heartache, but certainly with the hope of final achievement. This, the highest height of all

human excellencies, is crowned on the throne of the Crucified, in the person of "Him Who liveth and was dead."

My friends, if that first subject-matter is Redemption, if *we* may have joy in the prospect of forgiveness through the Passion, these, the others, furnish us with example. We may follow our leader in the path of our pilgrimage, and have joy, if we are faithful, from a certainty that sin cannot always enthral us, that we too may advance in the greatest ambition, the ambition of goodness, and follow on to the attainment of the measure of the stature of Christ.

III.

What then, we ask, what are those opposing forces which this principle is required to break and conquer?

(1.) There is a force, fierce as an unfettered animal, wild as the wind, strong as the storm; it springs from the fever and fret of a restless heart needing and finding no satisfaction. That spiritual emptiness of a soul *blasé* with the uses and failures of an empty world; the Greeks felt it, but feared and shunned it, and tried to forget it in the eagerness of artistic toil and political strife; the later Latins bent beneath it as a stout tree before a pitiless gale. It is heard in the hopeless wail of Tacitus over the grave of Agricola; it stalks black and dreadful in the scepticism of Lucretius; it was met but

not breasted, only held in polite and temporary parley, by the philosophers; it was embodied in the robust wretchedness of the monsters of vice who were the masters of Imperial Rome; it is found with less excuse in Christian times, in the racket and the rush of over-strained civilisation. Call it *taedium vitae;* call it *ennui;* call it a lazy weariness of spirit in the over-worked toiler for this world, or in the *blasé* idler—whatever you call it, it is that mortal sickness of the human spirit, worn out with a life of unsatisfied desire, with the knowledge that riches and pleasure cannot gain for it a salvation or win for it a rest,—possessions only of those who hold the hope of a future, itself the first dawning of supernatural joy.

(2). We have another force in the pressure of the present.

It surely comes to all either in failure of health, or overwork, or bewildering anxiety, or heartbreaking bereavement, or change of circumstances, or fading of dreams, or parting from others; it is felt in bereavement that has broken you, sorrow that has subdued you, change of circumstances, loss of fortune, forgetfulness of friends, disbelief in you by those whom you believed in, and, what is infinitely worse, disbelief in them when you have found them wanting, and the sad remembrance that you expected too much, and have been accordingly the victim of disappointment not undeserved. It may produce despondency; it may

eventuate in a life of miserable murmuring and habitual discontent; or it may be made to yield the "peaceable fruit of righteousness" to them who apply the stimulating and sustaining principle. Therefore, brave men, face the Crucifix, watch the flying disciples, have the courage to stand by Christ, meet the assaults of sorrow with the proud hope of anticipated joy.

(3.) And there is personal and spiritual and accomplished sin.

If you have had no religious perplexity of the spirit, at least, at least, have you never sinned? Have your passions not devastated you? Has your worldliness not worn you out? Have you not felt the fierceness of desire, and the difficulty of its domination? Oh, it is when you get to the Crucified you see in the Atonement the way to penitence, the possibility of pardon, the path of peace. We must be filled with misgivings when we know that we have done wrong; but when there is penitence, to read on the Cross that there is pardon, this is a source of joy.

(4.) And religious perplexity.

You are in an age when Christianity is attacked with pitiless severity; you need fear no argument against the truth shaking your faith, though it assail your intellect, if the spiritual conditions are fulfilled; but the strength of your stand on the side of the Crucified is not the strength of your degree at Oxford or Cam-

bridge, it is not the power of your intellect; it rests and will rest on moral grounds. But certainly it is *hard* to wait, and not be swept away by the immediate power of an argument or the sniff of a sneer; certainly it is difficult to stand boldly yet wisely by an unseen Master, to be faithful amid the faithless, and ever true in spite of corrupt opinion. The question is, Are you trying to do your duty? Are you trying to say your prayers? Are you living in communion with your Creator? Then, I undertake to say, you are in the way to keep alive a sustaining principle which will breast the religious difficulty of this great, and, I add it, of this bad time. If, yes, *if* we are to avoid the Curse of Meroz, it is by the hope of a future, and the joy in God that we need to be stimulated, that we need to be sustained in coming "to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

IV.

Yes, the conditions of preserving such a principle are not far to find.

On the Cross we have our example: in us it is a gift of the Holy Ghost sent by our Ascended Master; and it is a fruit of the Spirit in its relation to God; it depends for its energy upon our faithfulness; it is not so much the quiet joy from an accomplished fact as the larger, bracing joy of anticipated victory; and it is pre-

served bright and sustaining in those who willingly make sacrifices for Truth and Duty.

My brothers, I have done. In the spiritual life there are fierce and opposing forces; but to anticipate the triumph of goodness, to look on to forgiveness and liberty, is to keep the heart young.

Keep before you that Vision which sheds a new sunlight on common life, and places the simplest facts in true perspective, which raises highest hopes, and creates the best ambition, the ambition to become like Christ.

Put then, put noble aims before you, not selfish; cultivate, amid the allurements of self-deceiving, sincerity of purpose. Whatever your *mistakes* may be, do not let your consciences be burdened with *falsehood* when you come to die; make the staple of your life not so much the work done under the pressure of excitement, as the efforts hidden with Christ in God; and live, live, however humble your calling, with a sense of Eternity.

The sea sets onward through the Straits of Messina with a heaving swell, smooth, yet unflagging, even when the winds are silent and the skies are clear; the Tiber rushes onward, mad and swollen, century after century, by the Sylvan's Cave: now like the restful, now like the restless waters, human waves unnumbered of the rising and falling peoples have swept over the hills and plains of Italy, have passed and disappeared; civilisations many, dim or brilliant, across the histories of Greece, of Syria, of the twilight East, have danced

into the sunlight and died into the shade; but, in storm or summer stillness Soracte has towered above the dim Campagna and the Sabine Mountains, calm and stately and crowned with snow; and amid all human agonies and the tragedies of the peoples, the giants of the Abarim, folding round them their draperies of purple, have watched the starlight, or wrapped in their robes of roseate brilliance, have reckoned with the dawn. So human passions, troubles, sins, may flow onward in wild current, but principles, supernatural principles, stand firm.

Let me borrow an image. Time rolls away. High on the hills stands the tempter beckoning you to pleasure, and then as surely to despair; high on His Cross hangs the Crucified, calling you certainly to suffering and duty, and then as certainly to joy. Choose, choose which to follow. Can we hesitate? No, Christ of the pierced hands, no! We need a stimulating, a sustaining principle. What bore Thee, Lord, to victory through the anguish of Thy Passion may nerve us in our march through the Valley of the Shadow. Surely, following Thee, we shall find, with the Prophet, "the joy of the Lord is my strength."

SERMON VIII.

THE WITNESS TO THE POWER OF PRAYER.

The Witness to the Power of Prayer.[1]

"*Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly.*"
ST. LUKE xxii. 44.

THE Evangelist is here narrating one of the most mysterious scenes of the Passion. There are points in life, in every human life, at which so severe is the strain on the fund of human endurance, so fierce the forces brought into play, that those who are witnesses feel that a change must come. So full of tragic possibilities is the trial-time of every son of man that sooner or later each must reach a point when the cry of the soul is the cry of the sorrow-laden in Dante's vision, "I can no more." It is a "note" of human trial, not less for the good and holy than for those to whom Self furnishes the predominating object of regard, that life has its crises.

Such is the scene before us in the history of our Master's earthly trial.

There is another, even more thrilling, in the drama of the Passion—that moment of intense, intolerable, supernatural, human solitude known as *the Dereliction*.

[1] Preached also in substance in the Guards Chapel, Wellington Barracks, May 6, 1883.

In each was a gathering up of forces, a penetrating shock, and then a charge; in each the act of the Crucified was supernatural and mysterious: no cry of pain, though the pain was of unrelieved intensity; no scream of human life breaking down under overwhelming torture, though the torture was of immeasurable acuteness; no protest of an outraged spirit stung by anguish into anger at injustice;—instead of these there was an act of Prayer.

I.

An act of real prayer is great, powerful, and beautiful; a spirit in an energy of pure, subdued, but confident desire, rising up and embracing, and securing the aid of the Mighty Spirit of God. If we can believe the power of prayer, we may put forth the force of the soul and perform that act. How then can we learn that power? My answer is, From Christ.

Everywhere, my friends, everywhere and always Christ was, Christ is, the Representative Man. This in two senses. (1.) He is human nature in sum and completeness as it ought to be. To see Humanity as God imaged and loved it, to see Humanity at its best, we must see our Master. The outline of that fair picture is sketched in the Gospels. But for the fairest picture our human eyes need light, much more our human soul. We walk in paths of shadow, we live in

a twilight land. To *see* here in any measure the fine perfection of that figure, we need Divine illumination. "In Thy light shall we see light." To see hereafter its unimagined loveliness we shall need the glory of God. (2.) And Christ represents to us perfect human conduct. To see *how* to act in critical situations we must *study* Christ. In critical situations? Yes! there is the difficulty, there also the evidenced nobleness of a lofty human character. I need hardly say (for you know Who Christ was), the most critical moments in human history were the moments of the Passion. Oh, perfect example! Oh, severe and fearful trial! The terribleness of death is never so evident, so appalling, as in the felt presence of pure and throbbing life; the fearful force of corrupting miseries never so tremendous, so revolting, as in their power upon the fainting yet unfaltering Christ.

Here then we are face to face with Representative Humanity at a critical moment. To realise its teaching what illuminating circumstances must be realised? Brothers, to place vividly before the mind any act of man worthy of memory, an artist must be master of three truths. First, he must touch the mystery of Time. He must view the hour. In this he learns all that the lofty heavens have done to emphasise the fact; the solemn sky, the circling winds, the sunshine, or the silent stars, having watched, are called in evidence. And then he must learn the Place. All that this earth

—our home, our grave—can add of associating tenderness is made to supply its record. And lastly, he must gather the fact of companionship here,—what is higher and more serious—all that human hearts in sympathy or alienation can add of gladness, of sorrow, or of chill despair—this, too, is summoned to illustrate the meaning of the act. These three supply it with a scene. Thus an act of a soul which takes by right its place in eternity—for, being done, it has the unchanging fixity of the Past, and being done by a living Will, it has a moral significance—is fixed by its surrounding facts of aid and teaching in the Present, and takes its place in history.

Now what is the scene, and what the force of the scene, of the act of the Agony?

The scene was as simple as it is familiar.

The hour was the evening, the quiet, perfect evening of Judæa. The sun had set; the night was falling; the moon above in Syrian clearness washed the olives with her torrents of silver, and threw on the earth a fretwork of light and shadow. The mountains had settled under their robes of deepening purple, stiff, still in well-defined and trenchant outline against the clearness of the heavens.

The place was "a garden," a small enclosure planted with olives beneath the crest and on the sloping side of Olivet, lying on the hillside, but touching the Cedron valley.

The company, three friends, weary disciples, tired and sorrowful with a bewildering anticipation of undefined, unrealised sorrow, who could scarcely keep their eyes open.

The scene was not sensational. It was almost homely, but for an overmastering sentiment. To Him Whose great act, Whose mysterious Passion makes it memorable, it meant intensity of solitude; solitude with a touch of desolation, unbroken loneliness.

It *appeared* quiet, commonplace—*really* it was awful.

Brothers, in spiritual matters appearances count but little. In the world of eternal act or passion there is a startling difference between appearance and reality. Why? Ah! our earthly eye can seldom see more than half the scene. Like the traveller in calm Syria when night is falling, we not only see imperfectly, but further, we are the dupes of mirage. Although our life is in it, here we cannot fully survey, and often only slightly realise, a supernatural world.

Ah! true, too true, scenes the most commonplace are often big with tragedy. The brilliant drawing-room, with its light and passing talk; the social dinner-table, with its serious words, its laughter, and its argument; the hurrying street; the busy warehouse,—in such ordinary scenes souls, living souls, make choices that affect eternity. The quiet, cheery, common countenance is often the veil of a soul of spiritual power and holiness; the brilliant, learned, eloquent tongue is often the

interpreter of a spirit dead, literally dead, to God. If we are learning to love *truth* supremely, to welcome all that helps us to be true, it is well to remember that in the great concerns of a spiritual world what strikes the senses is no measure, no certificate, of the actual fact.

Christ knelt alone amidst the olives, in the quiet garden, in the lonely night, and near, His weary, sleepy followers. It is a simple scene, but Christ's spirit was in action. What was the significance of the act?

It was very awful. It was an "agony," a life-struggle, a contest. Much was involved in that moment of apparent quietude, of real struggle; but *one* lesson at any rate is important. Examine it. Here we have a Witness to the Power of Prayer.

II.

The Agony was literally a contest.

What was the nature of the struggle? It was a contest with Evil; of that we are certain, although the depth and details are wrapped in mystery. Anyhow the struggle was with a force of which, alas! we ourselves know something. No one can live to the age of five-and-twenty, and reflect with any degree of seriousness on himself or on the world around him, without knowing that Evil is a fact. We find its cruel records in the blood-stained pages of history. We listen, and amidst whatever heavenly voices, still the

wail of its victims is echoing age after age down the "corridors of time." Our own faults and follies will not efface themselves from the records of memory; in the brightness of the flaring day of life they may fade into dim and shadowy outline, but there are times of silence—on a sick-bed, in the still house at midnight, in the open desolation of the lonely sea—when they rise like living creatures, spectral threateners, or blaze their unrelenting facts in characters of fire. Their force was not realised in the moment of passion. But conscience bides its time, bears its stern, uncompromising witness when passion is asleep or dead. Sin is a matter of experience. It has withered life, in fact, in history, with the deathly chill and sadness of the grave.

Somehow *all* feel it, but it is prominent and stern before the Christian. He can never forget, nor is it well he should, that we are in a world in which, when God appeared in human form, He was subjected to insult and violence by His creatures. That is enough. That is, without controversy, the measure of the power, the intensity of Evil.

If there is to be a contest with Evil, it is clearly a contest with a serious enemy.

Let us pause for a moment on this measure of the greatness of such an enemy. Plainly enough we need such a measure to be wisely aware of danger. Sometimes—we know too well—sin does not *seem* "exceed-

ing sinful." Things go smooth in life, the events of every day are quiet, commonplace. Evil is a mystery, still at work everywhere; it needs some certain measure to *reveal* its power.

Sometimes the great Atlantic recedes a certain distance from the Cornish coast. The headlands rise in grandeur, faced with stern commanding sheets of stone, and crowned with pinnacles of crumbling rock, and clothed to landward with green carpeting of wind-swept grass. The summer sunlight dreams upon the little mountain flowers, the summer moonlight searches out the crannies by the opening of the caves. The nights of June are calm and peaceful, the days of summer brave and gay; the paths along the cliffs are beautiful, and scarcely less attractive to the wanderer the shimmering tracts of stretching sand. Nearer, the waves wash inland, with a sleepy murmur; further, the roar of ocean forms the distant diapason to the murmuring winds—a dream of beauty when the sun is sloping westward in the warmth and glory of the summer afternoon. Look upward to the coast-line on the beetling crags; see that deep tinge of colour high above the ocean-level, see where it passes suddenly into the fainter grey. Last night the waves raged there and marked by that shaded frontier the term of their upward journey; to-night perhaps, with the wind from the south-west, higher still. *Here* beat the forces of the surging sea; *there* the angry waters, checked at last

by cliff and boulder, broke and roared and flung their blinding clouds of hissing foam. What is that line which marks the limit of their upward journey? That is the tide-mark.

My brothers, in the world of moral tempest there is a tide-mark. A great crime[1]—a crime such as that which lately sent a shiver through the consciences of Englishmen—is a tide-mark showing unmistakeably what Evil roused to energy—call it its proper name—what Sin *can* do. The greatest human crime, the highest tide-mark of iniquity, is the tragedy of the Passion.

Brothers, the advances of sin upon a soul are usually slow. There are small beginnings, there is a gradual rise, "a cruel, crawling tide." Evil creeps across a character. Alas! to help it there is a bent, bias in our human nature. Let it by slow degrees establish its sway in one soul, and—man being multitudinous—in many souls, *then* there is such a thing as an empire of Evil founded in the world of men. We forget this, but it is evident.

III.

How can we throw back so fierce a power? The answer broadly is, Religion.

[1] Preached immediately after the assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke, May 6, 1882.

But what religion? There are many answers. (1.) One by which we may be ruled is this, "A Religion of Feeling." Human feeling is a noble property of man. Among our large endowments we possess that quick perceptiveness—in varying degrees—of what is most touching, most attractive, most beautiful in the external world, in human joy and suffering and sorrow, and better still, in religious truth; hence a Religion of Feeling. That feeling should have its place, therefore, in dealing with the solemn certainties of man's relation to God, to eternity, is natural, is necessary, is not wrong. But it *is* insufficient. (2.) But feeling deep and strong, yes, and feeling even quick though shallow, will send its thrill through man's *whole*, and therefore even his physical being, and move the springs of tears. There is such a thing as a Religion of Emotion. (3.) Further, the truths of eternity are stately facts; and it is possible for any one of us to pay them homage, by experiencing and expressing a sense of joy and triumph which may be an outcome of only astonished and delighted nature roused to realise the spectacle of splendour presented by the mystery of another world. There is such a thing as a Religion of Enthusiasm.

Feeling, Emotion, Enthusiasm, they are noble powers or features of our being, but a religion which can enlist *only* these powers, face to face with Evil, is weak indeed.

Religion is a personal matter, it must hold a universal

empire over the being of each of us, it must rouse natural forces only by being in possession of supernatural power. To be religious is to realise in some measure, in some measure to act upon, the true relation of the soul with God. And since that true relation is best expressed by saying, "God is my first beginning and my last end," and since the giant force of Evil is exerted to direct the soul from living in and attaining to its end in God, then the religion which can withstand the giant Evil must be a Religion of Contest.

Sad it is to think that there are, there have been those who could kindle into fervour and dissolve in tears in singing hymns, in listening to sermons, but who when the hour of trial came would not serve God. There have been sovereigns of Italy who could be punctilious in acts of devotion, and fill their dungeons with guiltless sufferers. We too may—unless we use the grace Christ died to win us—feel at times and submit to religious ecstasy, and fail, miserably fail, in "doing justly, and loving mercy, and walking humbly with God."

Brothers, to possess a religion which can conquer sin we must follow our Master in the severity of principle, of conviction, of unflinching struggle. The external scene of His trial was simple, but He *fought*, and therefore conquered. Certainly He fought with Evil, "being in an Agony."

IV.

"Fought with Evil." "What do you mean?" you ask. Evil! Is Evil a *thing*, an object, like the Pyramids of Egypt, or the roaring ocean, or an advancing army? Evil is the act of choice of a created will. It is the rejection by the creature of the laws of life laid down, not as tyrannical rules, but as necessary truths, by the Creator. Evil takes three active forms, so says Scripture, so we have learned in the Catechism: the accumulated force of bad opinion, that is "the World;" or the uncertain revolt of our own corrupt desires, that is "the Flesh;" or a living being wholly surrendered to hatred of the Creator, that is "the Devil."

Think of the last. You realise the severity of the contest in remembering that you fight with a fiend. Satan is a person. In this is he like ourselves. Of man it is said "he has thoughts of himself." This is true of Satan; he can think of himself, he can purpose with relentless will, he can plan with unparalleled audacity. Scripture clearly, in scattered hints, or statements which cannot be evaded, tells us of him truths necessary to know. He is "crafty." He lays "snares." He is given to "devices." He has evil spirits like himself at his disposal. He uses evil men as his tools. Men may first neglect to oppose him, then become submissive to his sway, and even at last his almost enthusiastic agents. He knows much, but not everything; his means of

information are experience and observation; and he has great ability, but he is not omnipotent. He can entice and allure, he cannot compel. There are three specific marks of his character:—(1.) He is inveterate in his hatred of truth. He is a liar. (2.) He is obstinate in his abhorrence of charity, pure intention, and self-sacrificing devotion. He is a murderer. (3.) He shrinks from the open glory of goodness. He is a coward. To "abide in the truth," to "love good" and "love one another with a pure heart fervently," and to have holy fearlessness in the power of God is to be in direct opposition to him.

From this it is evident that our contest is with a tremendous enemy, *and* that against us he need never be victorious.

This is scarcely the popular view, but it is sufficient for us, it is the view of Scripture. Modern philosophers, alas! are wont to make merry over this awful truth. Unhappy they! I read the other night, in thinking on the subject, an essay of a modern writer on the revelation of this Mystery. Its ability I do not deny. But the blindness of eyes which have never seen or have turned away from the light of revelation is never more apparent to a Christian than in the flippant contradiction of the existence of our greatest enemy. To look at the world around us we feel as if it hardly needed Scripture to assert the personal force of Evil. Satan seems in modern England to flaunt himself in open

day. Make merry of it! Children may make light of the warnings of elders on the perils of gunpowder or the danger of playing with edged tools, but even though the one seems dull and harmless, and the other shining and attractive, we know that the warning has foundation, that the grave heads are right and the children wrong. Certainly to fight with Evil and the Evil One requires a Religion of Conflict.

For where do we encounter him? Where is the power-centre of the sovereignty of Evil? Where is the central stronghold of the empire of Satan? Let me borrow a thought suggested by a great teacher. Chiefly his sway is felt and feared in the shadow-land. Yes, the strength of that exercise is in the land of shadow. Where is the shadow-land?

My brothers, there are two shadows projected over human life from two associated and mysterious facts—from Sin, from Death. In that critical moment when the human will is subjected to the force of temptation and yields to its sway, in that solemn moment when the human spirit is wrenched away for a time from its physical organism, *there* is a special power dangerously, not irresistibly, exercised by the being who is devoted to Evil. A hint of this is given in Scripture in the allusion to the spirit "that now *worketh* in the children of disobedience," a hint of this dark realm certainly in the prayer by the grave-side that we may not "for any pains of *death* fall" from God.

There is a shadow-land. To enter it in sin is terrible. The awakened and stricken conscience knows its terror; to touch its borders is awful. The bravest soul that contemplates beforehand the certain though inexperienced act of death knows its awe. There are nights so dark we seem to *feel* the darkness; there are shadow-spots so dim under the weird awe of the moaning forest, or at the roots of the immense, inexorable mountains, that they carry with them a sense of terror and of chill. There is a shadow-land. How may we contemplate it without hopeless shuddering, how think of entering it without despairing fear?

Now here is a palmary fact. Christ our strength as well as our example boldly entered, and in the depths of its deepest blackness conquered the fiend. "He was *made sin;*" "He became obedient unto *death;*" and for all who *will* to follow Him, His love, His devotion is victorious. "We are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us." Yes! In union with Christ we can do what He did. O blessed and brave One! We may follow His example and employ His power. His power! How may we be possessed of it? In many ways. Certainly in this way. It is placed at the disposal of the soul that *prays.*

This is in effect the answer of Christ's revelation to the question, Why should we pray?

Brothers, in the battle with Satan we dare not stand alone, we must act with our Creator. In the severer

attacks of the Evil One we must enter with swiftness and with reverence into the awful, into the blessed Presence of God.

To enter consciously and willingly into the Presence of our Creator is always solemn. There are two ways in which man by his own act and on his own responsibility can hurry into the Divine Presence: the one is presumptuous and fearfully wicked, the other is in humility, and it is wise: the one is by suicide, the other by prayer. It is invigorating to know that in real prayer the soul reasserts and utilises its union with God in Christ; and it is consoling and supporting to remember that in that land of insupportable loneliness there is a relief and remedy in real prayer.

The weight of electric masses lies heavy upon the strength of the mountains; the folds of the fierce storm-clouds darken and distress the restless sea. There is silence awful and oppressive; then comes the crash of the thunder, the effort of the storm. Great and solemn is the struggle, but the spirit of nature seems freed by the exertion, and the meadows and the woodlands lie peaceful, if exhausted, and the rolling waters smile in returning light, and murmur in peaceful music, for the struggle is over, the storm is gone. That is like prayer to the burdened spirit—often an effort, an exhausting struggle; but the result is restful, the end is peace.

Two facts let us remember and act upon with earnestness.

(1.) The value of a formed habit of prayer. Crises are sure to come, and then we are equally sure to act on habitual impulse. Christ learned in His Humanity and practised Himself in the effort of prayer, and when the struggle reached its climax, the holy habit had its fulfilment. "Being in an agony he prayed." And—

(2.) It is in moments of contest that real prayer rises to its height and majesty. "When my heart is hot within me," says the Psalmist, "I will complain;" and of Christ it is written, "Being in an agony He prayed *more earnestly*." Prayer too, as the Christian knows, is not always answered *now* in the way he imagines most desirable, but it *is* always answered. If the cup does not pass, at least there is an angel strengthening the human spirit to drain it bravely to the dregs. Subjectively, there is comfort; objectively, there is real help. What might have been a tragedy becomes by prayer a blessing; desire which if misdirected might have crushed and overwhelmed us, becomes when truly used with the Holy Spirit's assistance a raw material of sanctity.

Certainly from prayer we gain three things: a powerful stimulus, and strength for act or suffering; a deep and real consolation; and the soothing and ennobling sense of duty done.

My brothers, surely to know God, to know self, and to know the world we live in, implies that we must pray. A life of prayer is a life of peace, *not* because we

dream, or drug the conscience, but because we conquer the enemy.

The Church issues her sweet, her wide invitation, "*Oremus*"—"Let us pray." And—oh, the joy to think of the wide sweep of power in that supernatural action! —the Church, and each living soul within her holy precincts, by prayer is perpetually holding in check or throwing back the kingdom of Satan, perpetually advancing and establishing the Kingdom of Christ.

I have done. What is it you yearn for, O worn-out and struggling spirit? The innermost, ineradicable yearning is for abiding peace. There is inexpressible sweetness in the hour of quiet after a day of weary labour, there is a tender refreshment after long parting in the presence of loved and returning friends. Life is passing, the world is changing; such sweet spots of sunlight are at last overswept by shadows; they were full of delight and blessedness, but they pass away. But amid all storms and struggles a life of prayer is a life of peace, not because all we ask is done as we desired it, but because we are strengthened to bear the trials of our strength as they come, and because it is the first sure foretaste of "the rest that remaineth," of that perfected delight in perfected achievement, when after battle and disaster, after pain and disappointment, the weary spirit reaches that only final and enduring rest of the creature—the rest in God.

SERMON IX.

THE WITNESS TO THE VICTORY OF LIFE.

The Witness to the Victory of Life.[1]

"*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.*"—1 Cor. xv. 26.

THE words of the text are dear and familiar, and full of solemnity. They are dear, for they lift the curtain from the unimagined mysteries of another world and show what the end shall be; they are familiar, for we have heard them with hearts attuned to the highest thoughts by funeral dirges, and in moments of mourning—heard them read over many a grave; they are full of solemnity, yes, and full of power, for they embody a glorious proclamation, a sort of general order; they imply a strife surrounded with strange uncertainties, with a wealth of even terrific possibilities, and yet express in unfaltering accents a forecast of final victory.

The teaching of these words, therefore, is not unworthy of the attention, of the effort of soldiers who must fight (as we all surely desire to realise) not only

[1] Preached first in part in St. Paul's Cathedral to the Members of "The Guild of the Holy Standard."

in the natural engagements of evident and ordinary struggle, but in the serious and changeful battle of life.

The religious man, my brothers, must have a struggle. Indeed, as life goes on, and its experiences accumulate, its whole aspect and tenor appear little else than that which characterise unceasing battle. Does man desire to find one compendious expression—at once short and true—for the forces in struggle against him? can he do better, can he reach nearer to the truth than by asserting that he is engaged in a battle with Death?

Life and Death! They include everything. Life and Death! They *are* everywhere! Facts take their meaning from their awful presence; Place takes its interest from associations constructed from materials of their supplying; Time itself is young or aged according to its submission to their tyrant power. The clouds gather thickly on the mountains; the sunshine sweeps its royal robes across the changing reaches of the sea; the frail flowers blush in beauty on the breezy headland; the seared leaves whirl in eddies in the gusty glade; the solemn cadence of music fills with awe and sorrow the chambers of the brain; the voices of sweet singers strike the soul with inarticulate, unmeasured, unembodied joy; the colour of the painter flares up in light and sinks in shadow like the advancing and receding meteors in the silent, startled heavens. The voiceless book-shelves speak when the living call for the testimony of each inhabitant—as graves may speak

of buried histories on the last great day—defying the bounding proprieties of time, and giving testimonies that unlock whole centuries of imprisoned years; the faces of our fellows speaking sudden words, in smiles or tears; the love that found no finished satisfaction, the fears that gained no final consolation,—all, all, however different their special histories, their individual disappointments, have yet one common undertone that lends them meaning—Life and Death.

Evidently two giant powers are everywhere in conflict. The question of questions into which all others must at last resolve themselves is, Which shall conquer?

Knowing what we do of human sorrow, gathering lessons from an ordinary experience, *this* we are inclined almost cynically to say—reading the apostle's language —If Death is destined to be an enemy conquered, certainly it will be the *last.*

Cynicism has no practical value; and desiring not to waste our life in sentimental dreaming, we ask ourselves, What is the serious meaning of such determined language, "The last enemy that shall be overcome is Death"?

I.

Let us ask in all seriousness, What, then, is the significance of Death, and what witnesses to its overthrow? Well, any serious fact, I submit, may be measured in the range of its meaning, at least in one of three ways.

1. We may form a judgment upon it from its obvious appearance, deciding its value, so to speak, by the sort of figure it cuts on the stage of the world. Seen thus, Death is a very awful, physical change, awful, as apparently nothing short of an overwhelming catastrophe.

2. Or else we may make our measurements from its immediate effects on human life and human happiness wherever they come within sweep of its influence; we may thus measure the meaning of any fact by its surrounding accompaniments. In this regard, then, certainly Death is sufficiently sombre and severe; it implies, it necessitates the breaking of hearts, the rending of close and controlling ties; its usual, its natural accompaniments are parting, pain, and sorrow.

3. Or again—which is more to our present purpose —the weight, extent, and meaning of a serious fact may be ascertained with most entire accuracy by penetrating to its ultimate origin and exploring its cause.

Viewed thus, Death is indeed mysterious, and at best only half intelligible; none the less, however, is it a fact of too evident existence guaranteed by the highest power of verification, the power of a universal and saddening experience. But speaking as a soldier to soldiers in the Christian battle, it is impossible to forget that here at least Death is assailable; for the ultimate cause of Death is a condition of things which admits of, which invites us to revolt: the ultimate cause of Death is Sin. "Death," say the Sacred Scriptures, half

lifting for a moment the veil of Eternity—"Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Now, a fact is unquestionably a stubborn, sometimes even a fierce opponent. How deal with it, when we have reason to dislike it or to fear?

It is possible, of course,—although it is strange,—to deny its existence. Too deep, too sharp are the wounds in writhing humanity inflicted by evil, cruel and strong, for man to assert that all things are good, but none the less the idea is by some so attenuated that sin in its true, its flagrant form, is practically denied. Either it is a weakness to which human nature is subject, but for which it has no real responsibility; or it is a failure to reach the ideal of beauty which must be deplored, but in deploring which the soul feels a certain nobility and pathetic sorrow, as the hidden splendour of the zenith reveals itself by the sad and touching beauty of a stormy sunset on an autumn day; or it appears as a grave, an injurious, a saddening misfortune, under which if we fall we are subjects of pity, not of rebuke, and may fairly bewail our evil destiny, not as a criminal bewails his pitiable fate,—the result of his own misconduct,—but as the children of some rebel ancestor may lament the blot on the scutcheon of a noble house. That is, sin, as the Christian, as the Bible understands it, is practically denied.

My brothers, this is fatal, and it is foolish. It is fatal, for an enemy must be recognised to be resisted;

it is foolish, for however it flatters our vanity, and for the moment saves us trouble, it cannot alter facts; and none, oh! none are so pitiable, because so hopeless, as those who form the fatal habit of blaming, for all the evil which they themselves foster and propagate, the circumstances of life, or their appointed duties, instead of frankly confessing that they are themselves to blame.

Or a serious fact may be despised. There are who are so lofty in their contempt of human weakness, and so confident in their own unapproachable integrity, that sin when it appears in flagrant form is a subject not for their sorrow but for their scorn. It will not do. Subtle sins of soul will often eat out the power and beauty of a character as much as more evident ill-doings. The lofty contempt of a self-satisfied spirit is far indeed from the strength of any prevailing armour against sin.

Or sin may be ignored. A constructive intellect may refuse to take notice of a fact that can only be dealt with to be destroyed. "Man," says such a one, "must be advanced, the path of progress is the line for fruitful human enterprise. Why waste our time upon the pit-falls and caverns of the Past? Certainly wrong is wrong, but the Past is over; push on for the sunlight; leave the clouds behind." It is all very well, but humanity is not so insignificant a factor in the universe; the acts of undying spirits are not of such slender results; a fatal power ignored sooner or later,

like "the whirlgig of Time, will have its revenges." Ah! this is folly. Deny the existence of the Pyramids, and still their solemn shadows fall across the Egyptian desert; despise the difficulties of the Cordilleras, and still their frosty precipices frown on you with anger or freeze you with cold; ignore the insubordinate indignation of a headstrong and revolted people, as in Ireland, in Egypt, in the old France of the Monarchy, smouldering embers neglected with indifference become at last a devastating flame.

No! to deny, despise, ignore, is not to vanquish; to conquer any destructive fact, you must annihilate its cause. If Death, the last enemy, is to be conquered, sin must be destroyed.

Sin! What is sin? For our present purpose, for the purpose, that is, of serious Christians with a definite desire to fight with the enemy, a sufficient and handy definition is this: Sin is the ruin of a moral nature; sin is that act of a soul by which it misses God Who is the end of our being; sin is the perversion of a human will.

Sin in this world is intensified, enlarged, rendered effective by the number of its subjects. In the New World an increasing community becomes a territory, a territory grows into a state; in the world of spiritual fact and struggle, sin spreads through the propaganda of its disciples and its agents, there grows at last a kingdom of darkness, and its crowning achievement is Death.

O Christian soldiers, to conquer Death you must annihilate sin, and this, by the very terms of its character, means, you must win your battle by doing your part in extending, in establishing the Kingdom of Christ. Keep it before you, soldiers of Jesus, for *that* supremely you are banded together in battle.

II.

To look at things as they are, it would appear, indeed, that Death has the advantage. Death, truly, "reigns in our mortal bodies," and at times, to our saddened fancy, the sound of this world's music seems one scarcely broken funeral march, measuring and solemnising the tread of advancing mourners, themselves also ultimately doomed to die.

Death! The world tries to forget it. The complicated system of things which constitutes modern civilisation, works on with unfaltering progress, wheels within wheels, the incidents are various, the system seems stable; yes, it works on, but soul by soul is ever dropping out, and the place that knew them "knows them no more."

This morning, what is the interest of the last "European complication," or the last diplomatic victory; of the last social combination; of the last political experiment; what the interest of the most recent theory of history, of the newest novel, of the

most striking novelty in serial literature; what the interest of the last commercial achievement, or the freshest failure of credit, to him whose time of earthly probation is being meted out by minutes, who is looking with dogged determination, or startled astonishment, or religious resignation—looking eye to eye with Death?

Death! *This*, this is a universal reality, because it touches the individual. However engrossing the passing acts of the world's drama, *each* of us,—we should never forget it,—*each* of us has in them only a life interest, *each* of us certainly must die.

Ah! then it is matter of overwhelming fascination, an assurance like this before us that *the* enemy Death shall be destroyed.

It is not then, unprofitable to ask, my friends, Are there witnesses to strengthen such a statement, to assure us of its final fulfilment, of its reliability of truth? What it means *exactly* this Victory of Life, we may not perhaps be able to describe, but that it *does* mean the one thing for which hearts are yearning,—namely, that Sin and its forces shall cease to have the upper hand,—of that we may be sure. Certainly then we cannot fail to ask the question, Are witnesses of the fact to be found?

Men cannot but ask such questions, and ask them as time goes on with just as unfailing a persistency.

For men stand, as years are advancing, like the

golden elms in the autumn, half-stripped of the treasures of early joy, taking still the sunshine, but shivering in the wind, and wondering whether, when this chill sunbeam has faded from the hill-sides, there will ever again be for them the warmth and the freshness of spring. All that is sad in life, all that is beautiful, all that stimulates or consoles takes then a fresh meaning for any soul that is certainly assured of such a victory.

(1.) And first there is our very fundamental notion of God. To name that name with belief and reverence is to acknowledge one Being in whom no fault, no flaw is conceivable, in whom meet, from whom spring all ideas of goodness and beauty, all moral perfections, of which the highest holiness has ever dreamed.

Every voice of our nature—if once we acknowledge Him at all—unites in proclaiming God's perfections. And this it is fair to say, indeed it has been said,[1] *this* is "a practical proof" of God's Moral character, because—to borrow from the same teacher—"it is the voice of God speaking within us;" and hence follows the natural, the necessary conclusion, that misery is found in evil, and in virtue and goodness joy, and that while *how* the work is best to be accomplished we are not capable of deciding, and therefore are wiser in not hazarding an opinion, and *a fortiori* wiser certainly in

[1] By Bishop Butler, *Analogy*, Introduction, *ad init.*

avoiding the habit, too common, of dictating to our Creator, still, that of this we may be certain that in a universe under the government of such a ruler there must be at last a searching change, a great revolution, from what we see. Now, indeed, now injustice is powerful, sorrow is universal, sin is often unrebuked, often unsubdued, the powers of Death, in fact, have an overmastering influence, but sin, death, sorrow, injustice are the breakers of harmony, the disturbers of human peace. O God of perfection, O undying goodness, O uncreated beauty, in thyself, thy character, thy attributes, we see that goodness and order and right must, in the end, prevail; in the end, because God is God, Death shall be swallowed up in victory; Death shall die.

This, brethren, this surely is the highest consolation to those who desire to make no treaty with Death, and who are determined unflinchingly to fight with evil, and to find no solace, no companion, among the daughters of the Night. Surely, for to love goodness is to love God, and to love God is to know, as only love can know, with certainty that, though last, yet Death, yet Death shall be, and absolutely, overcome of Life.

To get back to this fundamental truth, this greatest of truths, is to have the best assurance, the truest witness to the Victory of Life.

(2.) And a second is Prophecy. There are in the

world many voices of God; the voice of childhood with its words of innocence and its demand for truth; the voice of noble manhood, witnessing against oppression and resisting wrong; the penetrating tones of tender woman lending help to the lost, and pleading for pity; voices of God, too, in nature, heard by the many, listened to by the few; the whispered wailing of the winds in autumn carrying in sympathy the dried leaves shivering to their fall; the first note of the morning breezes telling the moorlands and the mountains the stirring yet pathetic story of the breaking of the dawn; the trumpet clarions of the angry sea; the whispered music of the dying day—all speak of death in its distress and mystery; all hint also of life which at last carries the promise of victory.

Now Prophecy is a voice solemn and searching more than all. It is God's voice *to* man *through* man. In a sense there has always been some sound of it amid the world's turmoil; but in its majesty and perfection it is heard in the Hebrew prophets. The prophet *saw;* the inner eye was illumined with a light from eternity; *saw* and spoke in such words as the human tongue could frame; words always of power and wealth so abundant that the speaker himself could not always penetrate their depth and comprehensiveness, and would even vainly try to grasp and explain the extent of their significance. Probably in a sense it is always so. Who that speaks to his fellow-man, if only he speak such

truth as is given him, and with an intention clear of self, can hope to measure the meaning of his mission as it reaches soul after soul?

So with the Hebrew prophets. They spoke words of depth and intensity, but more, they used *events*, as we now use words, as living signs of things.

Prophecy is the Sacrament of history. Events of one age, of one life, or sometimes even one incident, become with it the outward sign of vaster changes, and significant facts of the future.

Take an example. Rachel's name is joined with one of the sweetest of idylls, and one of the saddest stories in the sacred Scriptures. She is the very emblem of the tenderest human passion seen now, seen always, seen then when the race was young. The deep-minded, subtle, yet faithful and earnest shepherd patriarch gives her his heart on the Syrian hillside, and after a thousand difficulties is rewarded for his faithfulness by winning the maiden he had wooed. She has the power to awaken all that we respect in that strange and complicated man; she is the maiden of his young love, the inspiration of his labour, the mother of the boys who were his darlings, and whose troubles were his severest sorrow, and at last the memory that is fresh when his old heart is beating low at the close of his pilgrimage, as when he wooed and won her in the bloom of her girlhood, or moaned in unspeakable anguish over her too early grave. She is the very

symbol of human hope in fulfilment and in failure; of human happiness, and youth, and tenderness, and trouble; of the romance of early love; of the poetry of faithful affection; of the mystery of a mother's devotion and suffering, and of the unspeakable pathos of separation by the grave.

Her name is taken up by the prophet of sorrow. Jeremiah sees her bowing again over her children in labour and tears. The *immediate* fact before his mind is full of misery. It is the opening of the exile. Benjamin is assembled at Ramah by the commander of the Chaldean guard; assembled before leaving the home of their tribe for the country of their captivity; there is the wail of hopelessness, the dirge of the dying; Rachel again is weeping, old hopes gone, death and darkness in the future,—weeping for her children, just as, had she lived, her mother heart would have wept for Joseph carried to the land of the stranger. And as once "the son of her sorrow" became his father's stay, so here, too, is a voice of comfort to the comfortless,—"They shall come again from the land of the enemy."

So spoke the Spirit in the prophet, but the evangelist reminds us he spoke of something more than the trial of the time. He looked beyond into the mystery of things, and sounded the depths of an unfathomed Future. He spoke of severe distress followed by restoration. The early sorrow of Rachel was succeeded

by Benjamin's life and career; the immediate trouble before Jeremiah's eye was the forerunner of a return from captivity, not of the very souls that went, but certainly of the tribe; and then the evangelist perceived that the prophet's teaching pointed to a restoration more than national, a restoration under a new covenant, a restoration of righteousness and peace—those indispensable needs of the soul—a restoration of light after darkness, of joy after sorrow, and therefore also that it pointed to a distress preceding the restoration, a distress yet further on in history, a distress which immediately marked the coming of the Redeemer. The anguish of Rachel is also heard in the cry of the Holy Innocents martyred for Christ, and the comfort is the same, they should "come again," not in this world however, but in "a better country, that is, an heavenly."

The prejudice of sceptics can see in such witness only folly; but "there are other matters necessary" to the right understanding of sacred prophecies "beside the bare rules of grammatical interpretation;"[1] and men who fill their eyes with dust, and then scoff at the notion of the sunlight on the mountains, are subjects for pity, not storehouses of truth.

For human life is a marvellous unity. Everywhere, everywhere there is the common presence of love and

[1] See Mill *On the Pantheistic Theory*, Part II., on the whole question.

sorrow, of anguish and joy. The Prophetic Eye sees line after line, like mountains behind mountains, line after line of human trial and vicissitude, melting, merging, into one eternal truth. He who is the life of all humanity is the object of all prophetic revelation. Over that fair picture there always falls a shadow, but the light at length prevails. Rachel weeps, but at last is comforted. Righteousness is reached by suffering, goodness attained by sacrifice, and Life, moral, spiritual, eternal, is gained through the gates of the grave.

The last enemy, then, that shall be conquered,—but *shall be* conquered,—is Death.

(3.) And the last witness is the miracle of the Resurrection. The Lord of moral and spiritual beauty may be, without difficulty, the Lord of the material frame. By the Resurrection He has shown that so He is.

If that fact failed, we might doubt all history. Nothing can stand upon stronger evidence. Nothing can have a higher spiritual probability. The Apostles generally, indeed, record the *many* appearances of the risen Lord, but, St. Peter reminds us, that *not* to have broken the bonds of death would have been in Him an intrinsic impossibility.[1] The Resurrection only displayed in the sphere of sense a truth, necessary in the nature of the Undying, necessary and blessed for us all. Life at last must conquer. Death at last shall be "destroyed."

[1] Acts ii. 24.

III.

These things may be said to appeal only to the religious mind. Well, to what other mind would you appeal? Futile and fruitless, indeed, is any appeal, unless there be a sense, some sense of obligation to God, some desire, faint it may be, but real, really to do His will.

There is, however, some corroboration, some support to be found in other and almost undisputed truths. (1.) There is that sense of immortality, and that yearning for better things which, in some measure, belongs to us all. Consciousness, after all, is a fact to be respected, like other facts, even though it be not material like the resisting rocks, or fierce like the assailing sea. Mankind, as a whole, has been *conscious* of an undying destiny, and the persuaded possessor of a principle of immortality. This sense, made more incisive, more distinct by the revelation of our Master, is that power which preserves the heart from breaking, and keeps the reason clear as we stand in mute bewilderment of sorrow by the graves of those who have gone.

The spirit within man assures him that Death is an enemy, and meets with ready assent the statement of revelation that Death shall be "destroyed."

And then there is the desire for better things:—This

in a world of moral realities corresponds to the sense of immortality in the world of spiritual facts. In the face of forces, apparently overwhelming, forces of conventional morality, forces of rooted tradition, forces of opposing prejudice, forces of alluring self-interest, men *have* been able to obey the authoritative voice within them, to look onward *through* the immediate allurement, with the sense that, even though fascinating, it is the porteress to the Chamber of Death, and that Death, moral, spiritual, is not to be coveted, but to be "destroyed."

(3.) And then there is the Life and Passion of Christ. Yes, among the meanings of the great conflict of our Redeemer was this: The exhibition in *fact* of the thoroughness of the Victory of Life. Yes, this is pathetically verified in the life and the Passion of the Lord. The Resurrection would not be the triumphant witness that it is, if Death had not done its worst, its very worst, on our Master.

Here was a life of which the teachings were too transcendent for a merely finite world, they could but find their beginning in it, never their complete fulfilment; of which the ideal could only in part be realised within the boundary line of Time, and implied and demanded a perfection, which in truth needed Eternity; here was a life so human, yet so unearthly, that its very greatness and beauty could find no fitting solution in this low land of death and sorrow, short of such a

majestic tragedy as the Holy Passion. Such a death, after such a life, spoke in language of unapproachable eloquence, spoke of the ultimate impotence of evil, spoke of a higher world.

There are late afternoons in November, when the hush of Nature, like the silence of a sick man an hour before dying, shows that its wintry sleep is approaching, and the land is still. Not a leaf is stirring on the golden elms, the thickets know no rustling of the birds, the yew-tree by the church-tower seems to relent from sombreness to sadness with its weight of sorrow and its deepening years; the very hills are hushed and voiceless, they stand as if at pause in meditation, clear cut against the fading carmine of the sky. Winter and darkness are steadily advancing, and yet the very magnitude of the present sorrow hushes Nature into a patient expectation that a brighter day will dawn.

When Death has laid his icy hand upon our Moral Nature through our own separate acts of sin, where shall we find forgiveness, where strength for recovery but in the merits and might of the Most Holy Passion? When Death affronts our understandings with the awful dread lest all that is bright and beautiful, and noble and ennobling, all we have loved the best, all we have honoured the most, should find its close in the icy chillness of the grave,—then, then, it is the record of the submission of Jesus, the story of the sacred Passion of our most dear Redeemer, which

assures us of our eternal value, and convinces us that Death must die.

May we not, then, trust and be strong? Must we not then die daily to all that sows the seeds of eternal evil? Ought we not to take our stand in the battle on the side of Right, and Truth, and Duty, which shine in the brightness of eternal splendour, as seen in the sorrows of the Cross?

And, brethren, when in the final struggle, and hand to hand, we face, each for himself, the last fierce foe, shall not the thought of that final victory nerve us to be brave? To whom, then, shall we turn but to Thee, O Conqueror of Death and Darkness? Ah! with Thee by us, all will be well!

Yes, this has been the strength of the unlearned and lowly; of those also who have possessed the highest gifts of heart and intellect which God could give.

When Tasso died in San Onofrio, after a life of protracted suffering and accumulated sorrows, after the principles of Death in him—pride and over-sensitiveness, earthliness and self-seeking—having been chastised and purified through trial by the loving and correcting hand of God, receiving his last communion, "he spoke no more," says Manso (in words such as these), "of anything touching this life, or the fame of his genius, but turned altogether to the things of another world, he received absolution from the ministry of the Priest, and the Holy Host from the altar, and lay for seven

days continually communing with his Saviour, and abstracted from earthly things, and so sensible of another world that consolation and compunction came to all who stood by."

Sweet picture of a soul rising by grace above the perils of the grave. Yes; Christ is our Life. In Christ Life finds its perfection, and Death—the last enemy—shall die.

SERMON X.

THE VISION OF THE TRUTH.

The Vision of the Truth.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there."—REV. xxi. 23, 25.

LIFE, my brothers, life, we have dared to say upon a former occasion,[1] life is a journey, and life is a work; and it is necessary—it is necessary for each separate soul—to toil at the work which is implied in living, and to guide the footsteps on the advancing journey, and that toil and that guidance can only be effected by a Christian at the cost of serious effort.

Well then, if we are to hold our hand quite steadily over life and conduct, we need some leading and determining principles. For the Christian, these principles are enumerated on the scroll of the Passion. We have passed some of them in review,[1] and have remembered so much as this:—the restraining force of the fear of God; the guiding influence of submission to the claims, and effort to obey the demands, of His Holy Will,—yes, faithfully to do that will, even when it

[1] See Sermons iv. v. vi. vii., upon which this sermon, in its earlier form, followed.

is hard, and when it is exacting. We have recalled (have we not?) the fertilising force of a self-sacrificing and constant effort; and lastly, we have not forgotten the stimulating, the sustaining effect of anticipated joy. And therefore we come to this: it is a true philosophy to say, in a practical subject-matter, the value—although not the truth—of any principles must be tested by their consequences; that is, the question of their practical importance depends on the answer to the further question, "To what do they lead?" St. John, my brothers, St. John supplies us quite adequately with an answer.

What, then—what, I ask—is the consequence, what the large consequence, of the principles of the Passion? St. John is the apostle of the Passion. He lay close to the beating, to the bleeding, Heart of Jesus, *and* he gazed upon Christ in His glory. Like Dante, when he gained the shores of the Purgatorio, he saw a long, strange streak of sunlight streaming across Life's waters after the darkness of the night. The sunlight grows and breadthens and extends, and spreads, and takes the mountains, and enfolds the peaks, and touches the summits with the radiance of the dawn; until Darkness and her daughters lie heart-broken and weary, like Angelo's sleeping figures in the marble of San Lorenzo,—and then He is conscious, in its fulness of consequence, of the radiance—joyous and peaceful—the radiance of Eternal Day.

Now, the central power of this burst of glory is still the Christ of the Passion, "The Lamb is the light thereof;" and the darkness and the danger of the journey have ended; and the delight of the vision—a vision which supported and stimulated the martyrs, which has soothed the creature in sorrow, which has exalted and comforted and sustained,—is the remembrance that life, with its toil, and struggle, and anguish, and disappointment, at last, at last has an ending in glory,—that "there is no night there." And therefore the answer of St. John, if we question him as to the value of the principles of the Passion, comes to this—that those principles draw us closer to the Lamb as the light of humanity, point and guide us to the end of trouble and darkness, to the breaking of the day.

I.

Now here is seen the value of Christian Principle. My Friends, in ascending the mountains of Switzerland, first the climber begins his journey by a disappointing contradiction. He descends from some sheltering châlet, by the light of the waning moon; he has to go over a broken path, and with a stealthy step; there are before him real tracts of trouble; the dim light alters proportions, and deceives as to distance, and so, plunging onwards, he hurts his feet. Onward he goes; he must cross the interspaces of gloom, where the

shadows fall in blackness on the bases of the mountains, thick, with no shading of pity, but dusky and cruel as the hangings of Death. Onward, onward, the grasp of darkness is at last relaxing; the sky is clearer; there is a promise of the coming day; he struggles higher; around him are rising innumerable peaks, sheathed in the frost-sheets of diamond, and with the glint of the mingling glitter of the moonlight and the morning. It is an ice-world of splendour,—mountaineering made glorious,—for the light is increasing, there is a feeling of freshness, a sense of security, an exhilaration of joy; the dimness is dying, the severest of the struggle is distanced, he feels, and with a sense of triumph, he has his feet on the track of Dawn.

My friends, there is,—so a friend reminds me,—there is in the Palazzo Doria a most touching picture. It is painted by I know not whom, but I think it is of the fifteenth century, and I imagine of the Tuscan school. Anyhow, it is a picture of the Cross; a picture, I should say, of Christ as He marched full face to the Passion—of the Man of Sorrows on the way to Calvary; the Cross is upon His shoulder, and He has before Him the anguish and certainty of Death; but He goes with the gait of a conqueror, He advances with the step of a King, and there is a light in the face that floods the picture. The Man of Sorrows is on His march for the morning; for, brethren, the Principles of the Passion place you on the track of the Dawn.

II.

For these principles are powers of guidance in three important—nay, momentous—questions of conduct. Examine the assertion.

(1.) What is seriously necessary for any soul in order, in its mortal journey, to be useful and happy? The answer is—Not to live at random, but to have an object in life. Apply the principles of the Passion; these plainly teach a work, supernatural, serious, requiring self-restraint, demanding self-denial, framed on the pattern of the Crucified, ennobling, because humiliating by imitation of Christ, with an end in view, God's glory; and with a goal—attractive, alluring, consoling—before the soul: the state, or place, or home, or condition, or whatever you may please to phrase it, when the mere harshness of such principles shall have softened into their blessed consequences, and "there shall be no night there."

(2.) But there is another important question: What is to be my view of the world? What is the attitude of the soul of the Christian towards the mass of mankind? The Optimist views it all through the medium of a rose-coloured dream. Probably he is possessed of abundant health and ample or sufficient fortune. The mass of wretchedness, moral, physical, mental—the preponderating possession of fallen man—to this he

resolutely shuts his eyes; his easy good-nature, or self-pleasing theory, fixes his attention on some supposed perfectibility of man, and he is dwelling in a dreamland in which railways and telegraphs, steamships and commerce, board schools and philanthropic institutions, have produced a happy humanity by the magic of "Progress." All is going onward as merry as a marriage-bell. The only objection is—theories do not alter human suffering, and to this theory facts do not square. Alas! why, if this be so, are hearts broken? why are Wills perverse and stupid? why are old joys so quickly fading? why are hopes blighted? why do the fairest visions pass and change? why do the young die early? why are friends parted by estrangement or death? why is there no power of pushing before us the frontier of the grave? No, certainly, the principles of the Passion are not needed by the Optimist; but then he is a dreamer amid realities; in a world where a little patient thought tells a different story he has contentedly committed intellectual suicide. It is impossible *here* reasonably to deny the darkness. It is true it is blessed to remember "there shall be no night *there*."

(3.) And again there is here a revelation of the Future.

The Eternal City is in fact the working out of the twofold divine benediction. It is the completion and beatified result of purified characters. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way," and "Blessed is he whose

unrighteousness is forgiven and whose sin is covered." This is the glorious end of innocence and penitence. How does the corrupt heart of man doubt or disbelieve it! Innocence! can it be found? To "keep innocency"—is not that a dream? No, not so: there are those whose names are engraved on the hands of the Crucified, who have walked through the fire and felt no scorching, have faced the enemy and never been hurt by him; there are those in whom the powers of darkness have found no home; sweet souls, sweet and strong; plunged in sin, as Jesus in the Agony, it pains, it cannot harm or stain them. Their joy has never left them; their robe of baptism never been soiled; hearts full of tenderness, and yet on fire with indignant horror at wrong; princes of the children of men, "they walk with God, for they are worthy;" kept by grace from transgression, free from "the great offence," they have made no treaty with death, they have their feet on the track of the Dawn.

And the penitent suffering souls, yet victorious. Once conquered, once surrendering, once captive to the Evil Powers; dreamers, or disappointed or downhearted, the world has overtaken them, or the Devil enticed, or—

> "The sinful Flesh
> In its rose mesh"

has entangled them,—but *one* Vision at last prevailed—the Vision of supreme love and sorrow, the Vision of

Christ; and the "grande et suave vulnus amoris"—the "broad sweet wound of love"—became *their* salvation. Blessed are they, travel-soiled and wayworn, yet *they* too at last, *at last*, have their feet on the track of the Dawn.

And in the end? Why, holiness and everlasting life, the triumph of saints, the completion of character, "No night there."

"No night there!" Think. There is nothing more beautiful than the breaking of the dawn over the hills by the Hudson, when the time is setting onward and the Fall of the year has come: the distant mountains against the clear horizon, the shadowy expanse of intervening spaces, far-stretching, broken with rise and hollow like a receding sea; the noble sweeping river, and around, the slopes and summits of the Catskills, swathed and crowned with forest robes and forest diadems of leafy gold. Onward the light is marching, calm, clear, penetrating. The distance dreams like a dreamer when the face is lighted with a smile; the river flows, but with a sweep of solemn certainty; the golden woods are lit with living fire. What is it but that light unspeakable, filled with the sweetest saddest memories, the pathos and the splendour of the dawn?

Nothing more beautiful! unless it be the pageantry that fronts the watcher from Morello when day is breaking over Florence. When Vallombrosa snaps the

shafts of travelling light and strikes them off across the valley in thousand showers of rosy brilliance; when the Duomo seems to rise higher, more distinct, in graceful outline against the vivid gleaming of the sky; when Giotto's Campanile shows for once its colour, in a light all but unearthly; when the sleeping city lies still in shadow, and the Arno with its silver thread begins to interweave a strand of gold; when voices seem to come from the first hour, heralding the last, voices of hope, voices of Resurrection—the breaking of the Dawn!

"Nothing more beautiful!" unless it be the calm strong inner light on the fair face of Guercino's Angel—

"At Fano by the sea,"

the light of love and sorrow streaming through the soul of the Guardian creature from the face of God—the breaking of the Dawn!

"Nothing more beautiful!" unless it be to watch the smile steal quietly across the fair face of your sleeping boy, when the sweet little soul has gathered out a memory of some angel friend's experience, twin sister of some Holy Hope within an immortal, and the light of coming glory has wandered through the sleeping eyes, illumined their blue, poured under the long lashes, and rippled upwards to the sunny hair—innocence in the sunlight of two eternities—alas! the year of cloud perhaps between!—the eternity of undying love, and the eternal glory of the Resurrection: be-

yond this we cannot travel, *this* is the fairest image of the breaking of the Dawn.

The breaking of the Dawn! It is coming, it is coming, there is a land of brightness after darkness; amid all sorrow hope will yet have its triumph: "there shall be no night there!"

III.

Night *here* however. Why?

The answer, though in the last resort not easy, is not difficult in its nearer meaning. Not easy to say where darkness originated, nay impossible to get at the grounds of evil; above them roll deep and impenetrable waters, as the moaning ocean covers the roots of Atlas; but possible to see how it gathers gloom. "Night here," why? the answer is, From the absence of the Sun: from the accumulation of the clouds.

There are clouds *and* clouds. There are the tender streaks of alternate vapour which lie like veils of finest texture across the burning blue of summer; there are the travelling ranks of pilgrim clouds, quiet, unthreatening, persevering, clambering athwart the bending branches of the forest, clinging or sweeping onward along the ridges of the hills, like heavenward-tending souls, looking upward to eternity hopeful and earnest, full of unabating toil. There are clouds *and* clouds. There are storm-clouds fierce and threatening, rising

slowly pile on pile above the mountains, or drawn along in dense and threatening phalanx, barring the passage to all comers across the western horizon of the angry sea. There are clouds *and* clouds. There are clouds of night, slow, pitiless, determined—like vultures from the desert coming one knows not whence, but scenting death and flying forward—clouds changing gradually the face of day, warning of darkness, and then creating it: without the tenderness of summer mists, without the earnest hopefulness and patient labour of the advancing pilgrim clouds, without the eager fierce enthusiasm of the clouds of storm—these are chill as the blinding spray of resisted waves, pitiless as fields of illimitable ice, hopeless and calm as the heavy clammy atmosphere in the vaults of death. They whisper of no morning, they are motionless, hopeless, terrible—the Daughters of the Night.

This is human life. There are clouds of darkness. My brothers, there is Sin. Wills opposed to the will of changeless goodness: wills almost fixed in evil—eyes from which all vision of brightness seems gone: hearts which seem to keep no trace of pity. Will has been disgraced, act has followed upon act, habit has gradually darkened life, and created character: there may be dying embers of tenderness and sweetness, of purity, of truth, but the fires are gone. Ah me!—a ruined soul, or a soul on the road to ruin, how terrible! To be

growing worse instead of better: to be losing foothold, not climbing boldly on! Sin! it searches out the crannies in the purlieus of London; it creeps into its palaces; it is busy in Parliament, active in the city; it is lowering ideals, pulling down high hopes; with its blackness, its sorrow, darkening the day.

Soul of a sinner! Pause, think twice. It is hard to imagine deliverance: hard to believe at times that God's grace, that fresh breezes from the heavenly courts, can disperse such clouds: but it is true. Look up, the night is dark and terrible. Look up, march eastward: repent, cry for help, take heart; though the path be rough it is the path of the Holy Passion. The day is coming: sin shall be conquered. The city of the saints is the land of the sunlight. "There shall be no night there."

There are clouds *and* clouds. There is sorrow. Ah! who has ever read, who can ever read, the mystery of tears?

But there it is. The world is very busy. The craftsman plies his trade; the merchant debates, arranges, speculates in the exchange; the workman toils; the student pores over his books; the thinker traverses the corridors of thought; all are engaged, and life is active, and men fill and register the progress of the years. Stop! What is that Voice, thin, plaintive, penetrating? How low, how unobtrusive, and yet heard everywhere, everywhere, below, within, around, above the din of life; deep as the undertone of the

restless ocean; weird as the gusty music of Hungarian players passing across the gay crowds of a London drawing-room with thoughts of a distant land, and rugged mountain tracks, and lonely homes, wrapped in a garb of saddening song; awe-striking like the black despairing backgrounds of Salvator; plaintive like the wailing voices sweeping from the secret chambers of music through violins possessed with the genius, the heart-piercing genius of Spohr. This Voice is everywhere; this form flits through the ranks of humanity: trailing clouds are following it—the Clouds of Sorrow. They are dark, they are blinding, like the mist on the mountains, but they too can melt before the sunlight. There is a home where no sorrow enters—*there* dwelleth no evil, "there is no night *there*."

"Clouds *and* clouds."

Yes, then, there is Death.

"Too full of Death, the great world is the hall full of weepers."

Death! We need not dwell upon it. However it be lightened by the faith of a Christian, what thinking mind can fail to acknowledge there is the solemnity of Night about the grave? Well, the dawn of Eternity shall break, and Death itself shall die.

IV.

There are many difficulties, many sorrows; yet are there not some alleviations?

Ah, believer! Life is never altogether darkness when it is illuminated by Hope. "Ever the worst turns the best to the brave." True, true, we are in a pilgrimage of mystery and trouble, but the truth will one day be before us, the trouble one day be ended. Look upward, take courage, never allow the cowardice of permanent despondency, or the blasphemy of final despair. Trust God.

Surely even here are streaks in the darkness. There are quiet hours of rest and blessing; there has been to each of you such a morning on the mountains, such an evening by the sea; such a converse with a dear friend; such a happy day of pleasure; such an opportunity of doing good; such flashes of humorous amusement; such evidence that the sun is *there*, though veiled by the vapour; such approaches of the daylight; such streaks of the dawn.

To repent, my brother, heartily, manfully, thoroughly, when you have sinned; to receive trial and sorrow with loving submission, and willingly to taste the sweet "uses of adversity;" to face death with faith in Him who loves you, and who has Himself penetrated its mysterious horror; and, while life is, to love goodness, truth, duty, God in Christ, and by the power, the moral power of love, to help and make men better,—this, this, surely, whatever happens, is to plant your feet firmly on the track of the dawn.

Make for the morning; allow no failing efforts.

From all parts, yes, from all will they come who come to the city of the sunlight, from the regions of darkness to the land of the day.

V.

"The city of the sunlight!" Ah! that brings us more definitely face to face with the question—"What about the future?" Well, the Blessed John assures that there lies before us something beyond all words happy, which he can only convey to us by speaking of it as "a city."

"A city" he calls it, I suppose, because he wishes us to understand that in the future there will be no room for pitiful self-consciousness, no desires of empty selfishness, but we shall be part of a vast society, and shall live in unstinted self-devotion, shall "love one another." The gates of it are many,—God's purpose fulfilled in many ways,—but the end is union in the heart of the Crucified, in the city of the saints.

There is a sermon included in the works of St. Bernard, though probably not written by himself, where the preacher speaks of the gates of the city.[1]

There is, he reminds us, the gate of Innocence, through which the spotless ones, with baptismal grace,

[1] S. Bernardi *Op.* vol. ii. ed. fol. p. 759. Sermo de xii. portis Jerusalem.

unsullied by the world, shall enter in; there is the gate of Justice, the path of apostles and martyrs, of "just men made perfect," on whom the Sun of Righteousness had shone with the warmth of His fullest splendour, and was reflected in the glory of their labour and the fervour of their love; there too the western gate, the gate of those who, like the Magdalene, once were slaves of Satan, but became the temples of God, and fleeing from the regions of darkness set their faces to the breaking of the day, and made for the morning; there too is the gate of God's Pity, there where those enter who, having lived in sin, by a miracle of mercy are led to contrition at last—the gate of the ignorant and sorrowful, the gate of the penitent thief. The four gates are of the opposite conditions, for who is innocent needs not penitence, and who is an object only for pity has not righteousness.

There too amongst the gates of the Innocent is the gate of the King, where none can pass but He who "knew no sin." There among the gates of the Just are the ways of those who have lived righteously in devotion, or of those who pressed on, ever "hungering and thirsting" for higher things, or of those who, though attacked with temptation to many sins, held forward by a firm resolve. There too amongst the gates of Penitence are the paths of such as like St. John the Baptist mourn for sins not their own, of those too who turn with entire and ready conversion from darkness

to light; yes, and of those who, though wanting in fervour and in the glory of charity, wanting therefore in the spirit of liberty, yet were not to be despaired of, because, undertaking the yoke of Christian service, at least they persevered. And there among the gates of pity is the steep path of those who, once worldlings, have been awakened by death's approach to a sense of sin, who have made restitution of ill-gotten gain, and who in sorrow and amendment have "made to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," and, through the grace that came by the intercession of the faithful, enter in; there also the gate of such as, even after many sins, in sincere sorrow, make a good confession; and there, yes, there also, the gate for those of whom indeed man and the Church knew nothing—the secret gate of hidden contrition, of such as were known only to Him who knows the hidden ones, and who can never—by the very terms of His nature of tenderness—can never spurn the being who, though late, alas! and known only to His omniscience, comes to Him with a broken and contrite heart.

And we shall meet, I take it, in that city, many whom we love, and many whom we have never loved, many whom we have known, and many who are beyond our knowledge; but believe me, believe me, you can never meet one in that city who has not consciously or unconsciously been saved through the merits of the Redeemer, acted upon the principles of the Passion,

and put his foot therefore really, though sometimes all too lingeringly, on the track of the dawn. Oh, fellow Englishmen, I beseech you, act like men! You have a short life to live and a glorious, you have a great future and most blessed, you have a work to work in your own souls, secret, serious; you have a work to work in the world by powerful influence, large, extending; and you have your place to fill in the sacred city if you follow the principles of the Passion.

Principles of the Passion! fear God; do His will; sacrificing self, gaze at the eternal future. What then? Then,—I repeat it,—"there shall be no night there," no sorrow, our hearts are broken with it; but only the secret result, to use again St. Bernard's expression, "grande et suave vulnus amoris;" the sweet, the enriching wound of love.

No; believe me, there can be no grassy graves; no sighing wind that speaks of desolation; no heartbreaking memories of a heartbreaking Past; no lonely hours, no tragic vision of a vanished face, no disappointment, no despondency—there can be "no night there." "No night there!" No darkness, no failure of knowledge, no failure of possibility to understand God's mysteries; no doubts of God, no death, no shroud, no coffin, no ghastly full stop in life's work and struggle, no frightful prospect of an incomplete life to those who are left behind; no chasm of cruel separation—there can be "no night there."

Gentlemen, I desire exceedingly, that you should keep your eyes steadily on the future; that you should do your work, in spite of many failures, with a high and uncorrupted purpose, ere you "pass through the body and are gone,"—are gone to the presence of Him who will supply the wants which come from our incompleteness, and pardon our pitiable failures. We may be forgiven if we desire exceedingly, and pray unremittingly for a high purpose, and pure principles in our fellow-Christians and our fellow-countrymen; you will unite with me in this, if I say I desire it exceedingly; but I have a larger, or at least a more immediate, ambition. I desire supremely that my fellow-men in this great cathedral should face the future *now;* that *now,* each of you would understand how splendid is your opportunity, how large your life-power, how awful your responsibility; that *now,* in the principles of the Passion, with sincere religion, with respect for conscience, with the love of Christ, with a desire to do your duty, with penitence when you have failed in it, you should place your feet upon the track of the dawn.

It may be, I have said, it may be very dark around you, and there *are* many difficulties. Well, act, I beseech you, on high principle. Oh sinner, give up your sin! repent, forsake it, face the Crucified, seek Him as the Saviour, follow Him as the Example. Oh broken heart, lean upon the strength of His supporting, and waste no time in empty complaining, but make your life a

sweet remembrance by helping others, in your little day, to do their duty. And when ye have gone on, remember there is before you a future which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man" to imagine, a future of blessedness to those that love Him. Remember that in that city you will find the result of your toil, and the end of your journey. Spurn the world, then, love your fellow-creatures; follow Christ; do your duty; hold communion in prayer; feed on the Sacraments; and then be gentle, kindly, loving, tender, supporting, strong. My brother, your feet then, your feet *then* are on the track of the morning; you are making *then* for that blessed rest, that sweet refreshment where difficulty, and danger, and darkness, and sorrow, and weariness, and overwork and toil, and disappointment have found their grave, have been satisfied with their epitaph. You are in the presence of the Undying; you are walking "in the Light of the Lord."

No night there!

Fancy—how few of us can fancy—what it would be to have no needed remonstrances of conscience, no pitiless pangs of remorse, no heavy burdens to weigh down the heart's warmest affection, no ominous and unexpounded future; and yet for every soul, however sinful, if only by grace it is sincerely sorry, this is no fancy, it is an approaching fact—"no night there."

No night there!

This then we know, this and no more, that there will be an age, there will be a habitation, where impulse is not opposed to principle, but is its enabling power; where feeling is tender but never maudlin or base; where strength is splendid but never fierce; where love is passionate but never impure; where hope is radiant but never unreal; where goodness is beautiful but never hard; where all in human nature is purified into one exalted semblance, but the finer shades of personality are never blurred into confusion, or narrowed into one type; where "all that has been at all lasts ever past recall," only purified into unflawed perfection, and exalted into ideal yet realised beauty, where the shadows have faded, and the morning is on the mountains, for "There shall be no night there."

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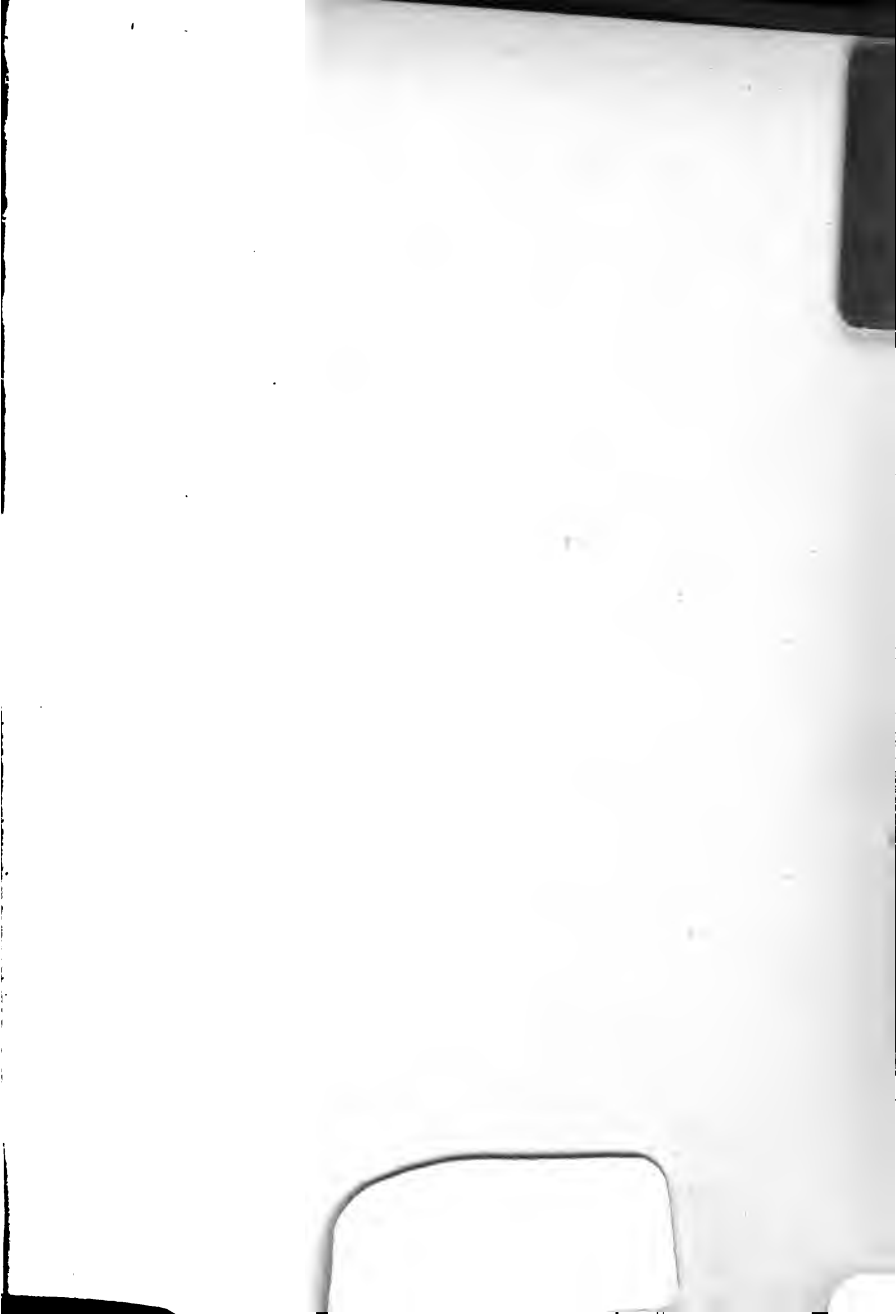
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